America, the $159 Billion Weakling

Canaday on Luminism • Anne Tyler on John Irving • Kazin on Orwell

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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v. 182 no. 17

April 26, 1980 Price One Dollar

How to Save Capitalism

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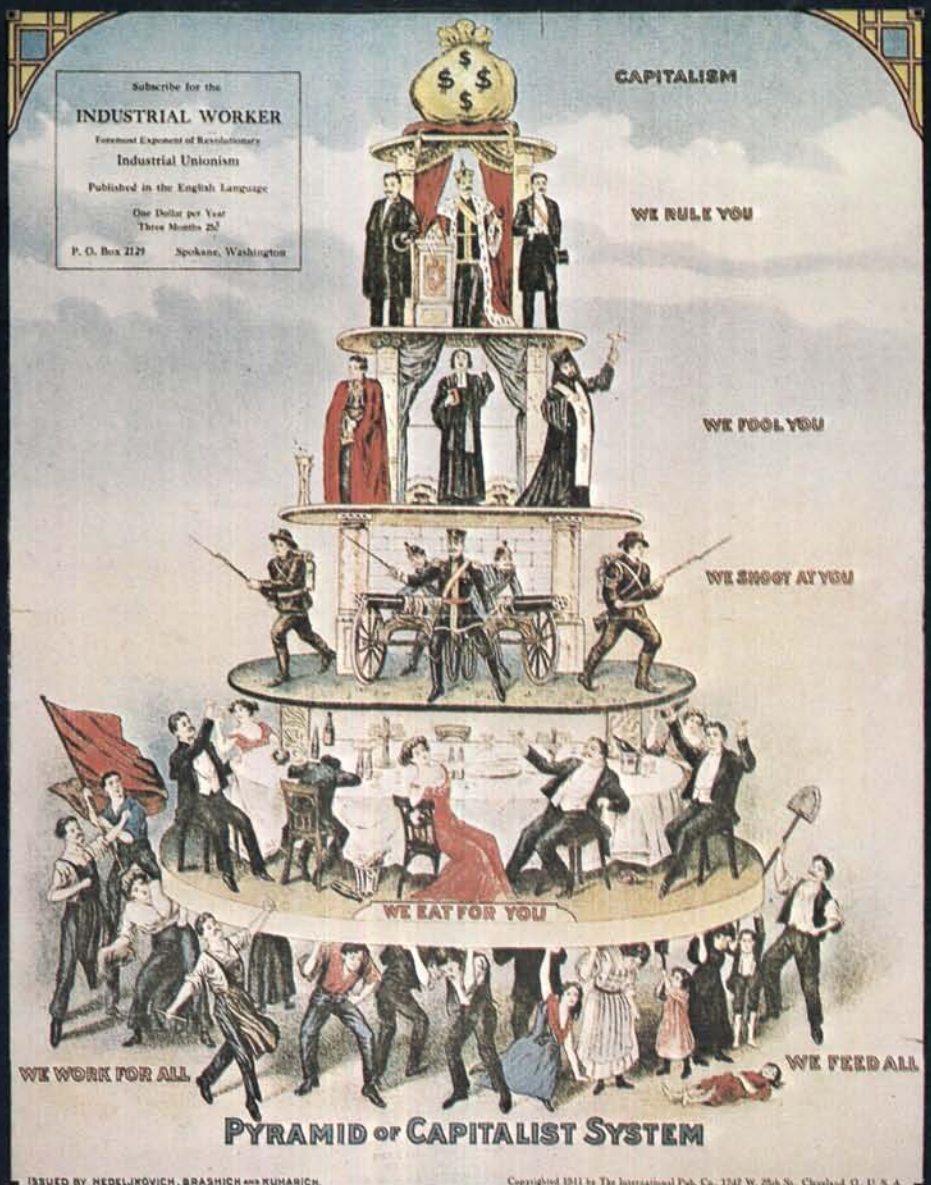
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TRB

from Washington ®
April 26, 1980

Tighten Your Belts

The recession has started. Jimmy Carter seems cast as everybody's scapegoat, and if he gets reelected in spite of a slump it will rank with the political miracle of a third of a century ago when Harry Truman stunned us in 1948.

Carter's chief hope is Ronald Reagan. My guess is that the governor will study his scripts more carefully from now on and perhaps bring back somebody like his former manager John Sears to help him keep his facts under control.

For the time being let us consider the recession. Bad news poured in on the administration last week. High interest rates have frozen the real estate and construction industry. The Ford Motor Company decided to close its assembly plant in Rahway, New Jersey, next June and eliminate shifts in other plants; Chrysler needs more money. The government announced that in March industrial production fell sharply and revised its earlier February figure down, too. The attitude of administration spokesmen to all this was stoic calm. Treasury secretary G. William Miller discussed the matter with reporters with a kind of majestic detachment very much as did labor secretary Ray Marshall a few days earlier. It is all part of the business cycle, you see. Since the 1974-75 oil recession (now described as the "great recession"—the worst downturn of anything since the 1930s) there has been, says Miller, the longest period of business expansion in modern times. That made a cyclical recession overdue. Without saying so Miller appeared to agree with the cover story in *Time* last week: "Recessions are not only unavoidable but often beneficial—despite the pain they cause some individuals—to society as a whole. They can purge the system of excesses, failed products and mis-managed companies."

The pain from such slumps to individuals has been less severe since World War II, the article continues, what with unemployment insurance and other social ameliorations. This is true up to a point, particularly if the recession is short and mild, as the administration ardently hopes. Just the same there is unemployment, and every one percent increase causes government revenues to fall and costs to mount by as much as $29 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office. And recessions also defeat political parties. Ike's last recessions in 1960 (he had three) helped defeat Nixon and elect Kennedy. The present downturn comes at just the worst time for Carter; the business cycle has crossed his political cycle. The six recessions since World War II have averaged 10 to 12 months, with Ford's in 1974-75 averaging about 15 months.

Everybody will be examining the economy now. *Time* magazine devoted 12 pages of text and pictures to the question "Is Capitalism working?" last week, just as Ralph Nader's forces staged their satirical "Big Business" demonstrations across the country and issued a provocative 640-page paperback *The Big Business Reader* (Pilgrim Press), filled with critical essays from Barry Commonor to John Kenneth Galbraith. As the ranking stands in Washington today, big government is under attack, big business is strong, and big labor is weak. The triangular relationship affects the mood of legislation and politics.

Organized labor has lost political clout and in some places is on the defensive. Trade unions often speak for American consumers and the depossessed, so that the weakening of Labor's voice is significant. Alone among industrial countries, says Secretary Marshall, American workers' wages have lagged behind inflation. With more young workers, women workers, and illegal aliens, and with the shift of industry from factories to service trades, the percentage of organized workers that used to be 35 percent of the US work force when the Taft-Hartley law was passed has declined now to around 23 percent.

In 1978 organized labor was stunned by the defeat of its cherished Labor Law Reform Act intended to aid unionization. The National Right to Work Committee alone reportedly mailed out 50 million pre-printed postcards attacking the bill. It might have passed the Senate if the filibuster had been defeated, but after six such attempts, cloture failed and the bill died. The same conservative tide killed consumer bills. The effort to set up a consumer-protection agency, for example, was killed narrowly in the House, 227 to 189. This is in a Congress with big Democratic majorities, and the White House backing the measures.

That big government is itself under attack hardly needs stressing. Everybody is against "bureaucracy" and "regulation." Jimmy Carter was going to change things when he came to Washington, and Reagan says he will do so now. People turn to government in bad times and maybe they will again, in 1981 say, if a real slump develops. Meanwhile Washington's prestige is extraordinarily low. Critics say, for example, look at the huge federal deficits! Rarely is it noted that Washington's deficit is largely due to funds it sends out to states and cities: in 1978 it sent out $77 billion. If we lump all federal, state, and local "government" spending together there was virtually no deficit at all. It amounted to about one-tenth of one percent of the gross national product. Heaven knows, there is plenty to correct in the capital, but government's necessary domestic tasks are rarely acknowledged.

Big business, by contrast, is riding high. You sense it when you see Mobil's advertisements around the country, "Sorry, Mr. President, you've been misled." It's about an oil dispute with Washington and multi-national Mobil is taking on the White House. Mobil was the $11 billion company, you remember, that absorbed Montgomery Ward. The oil companies have all been scouting for non-oil investments; Atlantic Richfield owns the London *Observer*, Tenneco owns Holiday Inns. One of the greatest merger waves in history has been going on. Concentration of American business is extraordinary. In 1977 the top 50 banks, for example, held assets of $600 billion. A Library of Congress report last year noted that "oil companies now own almost 50 percent of the known US reserves of uranium ore." They have bought coal mines, too.

Big business is increasingly political. The rise of the corporate Political Action Committee (PAC) is one of the changes transforming politics. Corporations and unions are forbidden to give directly to candidates but can set up special committees to raise and distribute money. There are around 800 corporate PACs now (six times the figure of four years ago). There are more all the time.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts, Vol. 182, No. 17, Issue 3407, April 26, 1980. Published weekly (except the issues of January 5, July 12, August 9, September 13) and distributed by The New Republic, Inc., 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. Phone (202) 331-7494. Single copy, $1.00; Yearly subscriptions, $28; foreign, $31; students, $17.

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(ISBN 0028-6583). Item g. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide. The New Republic is available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

April 26, 1980

Saving Capitalism From Its Friends

Making capitalism work better has not been a big worry for Americans of progressive sentiments. Some believe that the system is fundamentally flawed, and doomed to collapse. Some feel it has been so spectacularly fruitful that the only pressing question is how to divvy up the proceeds. Many hold both these attitudes at the same time. Three decades of postwar prosperity nurtured this confusion. Capitalist affluence has financed a wide array of liberal schemes for social justice. It also has provided generously for most liberals in their own lives. Now capitalism needs our help. It is not well, and its house doctors want to put it on a strict regimen of less redistribution, less nonmilitary government spending, and less government interference in the private economy. These conservative faith healers say that productive capitalism is increasingly incompatible with progressive social reform. Some on the far left, and others formerly on the left, agree with this diagnosis, and have made their choices. Those who disagree need to come up with a better diagnosis, and a better prescription.

The issue is "productivity"—how many goods and services an economy puts out for each person in it. Productivity says nothing about how society's wealth is *distributed*, but it determines how much there is to distribute. It is not a perfect measure of human happiness, but it is a good measure of the contribution of material things to the sum of human happiness in any society.

The United States still is the most productive nation on earth, and therefore the most affluent. In 1978 West Germany produced 85 percent as much per worker as we did, and Japan produced only two thirds as much. But these nations and others have been increasing their productivity faster than the US. Japan has averaged about a seven percent annual productivity increase in the postwar period, compared to about two percent in this country. More important, in recent years our productivity growth has drifted down toward zero. This means our level of prosperity is static. Does this matter? After all, life has been pretty good for most of us. Why is it necessary, international jealousy aside, for the next generation to live better than we have lived? Well, you don't have to be a capitalist-obsessive to believe that a no-growth economy will cause serious problems. In the past 12 years, even while the economy has been growing somewhat, the average worker's take-home pay has shrunk by 14 percent in real terms. This is mostly because more of our national output has gone to finance transfer payments like social security and pension funds, and social programs like medicare. A static economy would exacerbate this development and the social tensions it causes. The aging of the baby boom means that in the coming decades the proportion of workers in the population will decrease; if output per worker is static, the average standard of living will decline. Finally, whatever you may think of our present income distribution, it is politically much easier to finance new social initiatives out of economic growth than out of somebody else's hide. You can quibble about the statistics that show a growth slowdown, and about its causes and cures, but it seems absurd to quibble

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about whether productivity growth is a good thing.

One thing productivity growth can't do by itself is to end inflation. When the dollar volume of the economy is expanding faster than real growth, the excess is inflation. Even if we could lift productivity growth to four percent, double its rate in the prosperous postwar years—an unimaginable feat—this would sop up less than a third of our current inflation. Inflation has other causes, and other cures. (See "Liberals and Inflation," *TNR*, January 20, 1979.) But in the end, productivity matters more than inflation, because it measures real output. If productivity is increasing at a healthy rate, the pain of inflation is an illusion. But inflation undermines productivity; that is the real relation between the two.

Productivity growth has many sources, some mysterious, but the most important can be classified in two categories: investment and innovation. Investment means spending today's resources in ways that will increase tomorrow's output, rather than serve today's consumption. The most obvious example is building industrial plants and equipment. The US has been spending about 10 percent of its gross national product on this kind of investment, compared to about 16 percent in Germany and 29 percent in Japan. Government spending on projects like highways and money spent on health and education also are investments, thought they do not always appear that way in the statistics. Better equipment, better training, and so on mean the average worker can produce more because there is more capital "standing by his side." The more we spend on investment rather than consumption, the more we'll be able to consume in the future.

Innovation includes technological progress, business creativity, and any other development that leads to either a new or improved product or a better way of making an old one. Innovation increases the amount of consumer satisfaction that can be derived from a given amount of resources. (Investment increases the amount of resources available.) The rate of innovation is impossible to measure, and hypotheses about its causes and present status leave plenty of room for Spenglerian ruminations.

Conservatives and business spokesmen claim that investment and innovation both are being stifled by taxes. This is the message of the so-called "supply side" economics, and its proudest adornment, the Laffer curve. (See "Alms for the Rich," *TNR*, August 19, 1978.) Taxes, supply-siders argue, have reduced the reward for savings, for investment, for entrepreneurship, even for work itself, to the point where people just aren't bothering. The key to higher productivity growth, and thus to greater prosperity, is to rechannel all this wasted energy, creativity, and money by reducing tax rates. The resulting economic expansion would be so dramatic, argue the purists, that tax *revenues* would even increase.

There's no question that present tax arrangements, aggravated by inflation, discourage productive economic activity. They also are very unfair and wildly complex. But the remedies of the supply-siders don't deal honestly with these problems. Despite all the talk about across-the-board tax reductions, the real push has been to reduce the tax on capital. The first political triumph of the supply-side movement came in 1978, when Congress lowered taxes on capital gains. This year the same forces are back campaigning for changes in the tax rules for depreciation of business assets.

The 1978 law amounted to a tax cut of 20 percent or more on profits from the sale of stocks and other capital assets. Even before this, capital gains were taxed only half as much as other income. Four-fifths of the benefit from the 1978 change went to the richest two percent of taxpayers. The alleged purpose was to stimulate productive investment by increasing the potential after-tax return, though the break also goes to profits from gold, real estate, and other investments with no productivity value. The 1978 arguments rested heavily on several elaborate "models" produced by econometric consulting firms. Consulting their computers, these oracles-for-hire (see "The Future Hustle," *TNR*, February 4, 1978) declared that lowering capital gains taxes would drive up the stock market, thereby lowering interest rates and making it easier for entrepreneurs to raise capital. Otto Eckstein of Data Resources Incorporated (especially treasured by supply-siders as a fallen Keynesian) predicted a 20 percent rise. Chase Econometrics predicted 40 percent. The day the tax bill became law, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was at 901.40. Eighteen months later, on April 16, 1980, it had shot all the way up to 771.25. As for interest rates, the less said the better.

Undeterred, Otto Eckstein is back this year with a new model predicting that more generous tax treatment of depreciation will encourage investment, increase productivity, make the desert bloom, cure baldness, and cook dinner for 12. Depreciation is one of those complicated subjects that is generally comprehensible only to those with a direct financial stake in it. This is why it stays so complicated, and why the business lobbyists have chosen it for their loving attentions this year.

Business profit is revenues minus costs. Depreciation concerns the calculation of costs for major purchases that don't get used up right away. In figuring its profits, a firm doesn't immediately subtract the entire cost of an

Coming:

Irving Howe on Solzhenitsyn.

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Correspondence

The Schlesinger Mystery

To the editors:

In his vein-popping, arm-waving denunciation of President Carter ("The Great Carter Mystery," *TNR*, April 12), Arthur Schlesinger Jr. indignantly cites the following excerpt from the president's 1978 annual message to Congress: "Government cannot solve our problems. It can't set the goals. It cannot define our vision. Government cannot eliminate poverty, or provide a bountiful economy, or reduce inflation, or save our cities, or cure illiteracy, or provide energy."

Schlesinger treats this as a summary of Carter's philosophy, and draws dire conclusions therefrom. The president's own summary, which the historian omits to quote, came in the next line of the speech: "Only a true partnership between government and the people can ever hope to reach these goals."

Using this cropped quote against Carter is rather like attacking John F. Kennedy as a heartless welfare-baiter on the grounds that he coldly told the American people, "Ask not what your country can do for you."

Hendrik Hertzberg
Washington, DC

Hertzberg is the president's senior speechwriter.

To the editors:

I wonder if Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s bowties aren't so tight that they are choking off blood circulation to his brain. His disbelief that Americans (or an insane Democratic party) can't choose between a questionably intelligent and capable Kennedy and an indisputably incompetent bozo like Carter is partly justified; after all, Schlesinger has been the Kennedy family's white lawn jockey since 1960.

I agree that Carter bungled Cuba, Afghanistan, and Iran and has done less than any US president since John F. Kennedy, but I don't recall Senator Kennedy saying anything on the floor of the Senate about the "psuedo-crisis" in Cuba. I don't remember ever hearing him speak up against the Soviets. I don't recollect the senator making reservations about the shah, except for his own famous campaign blunder a few months ago.

Why is Carter the only candidate who is supposed to run on his record? Where was Kennedy all the time that Carter was setting fire to our economy? Voting for Carter policies—for those same policies he has voted for for 17 years: devastatingly inflationary ones. But Kennedy is a Kennedy. That's enough for Arthur Schlesinger.

Schlesinger's tone throughout the article was insulting and offensive, lacking totally the sense of humor he might think he has. William Safire, I'm sure, had him in mind when he wrote for Spiro T. Agnew that memorable line, "effete, intellectual snob." That is exactly what Arthur Schlesigner Jr. is.

Richard Orodenker
Pierce Junior College
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the Walt Rostow of his crowd, has shown that presidents can err and that the Democratic voters of many states are easily gulled.

In picking a defender for the "heritage of the modern Democratic party," Schlesinger should remember that in recent open primary contests, a high proportion of the Democratic crossover voters chose Ronald Reagan. This despite the opportunity to vote for Edward M. Kennedy, one of the country's best-known politicians, whose liberal views are well known. Since Senator Kennedy is admittedly farther to the left than is the president, and since defections from the party are defections to the right, away from them both, can we then conclude that a viable strategy for the party is to defend its left flank?

Perhaps Schlesinger can think of an anecdote from his White House years to illuminate this question.

Rodney C. Bryant
Woodbury, Tennessee

To the editors:

The April 12, 1980, issue of *TNR*, with Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s caustic attack on President Carter and Herbert Gintis's thoughtful review of Lester Thurow's *The Zero-Sum Society*, is a model of what your magazine ought to be, but is not always: namely, a combative defender of social liberalism, as well as a self-critic of the liberal tradition and its flaws, but all this in fierce opposition to the know-little, smug "conservatism" that is gaining in our political life.

And a tincture of social-democratic policies of the kind that Thurow seems to advocate and Gintis to be ambivalent about would help, too.

Irving Howe
New York, New York

Mr. Ball's premise

To the editors:

Professor Edward N. Luttwak's panegyric on me ("Mr. Ball's World," *TNR*, April 5) recalls an anecdote about Dean Swift. On observing two fishwives shouting abuse at one another from opposite windows across a narrow street, he is said to have remarked: "Those women will never agree, since they are arguing from different premises."

That is the reason the professor and I find ourselves holding contrary opinions. My premise is the United States; his is Israel.

George W. Ball
New York, New York

Argentine ad

To the editors:

In view of the well-documented record of political terrorism and anti-Semitism in Argentina, I find it rather astounding that an Argentine government ad should appear on page 23 of the April 15 issue of *TNR*. Even if Argentina has done Israel a good turn in the UN or elsewhere, it hardly deserves this kind of recognition from a supposedly liberal journal. At any rate I would prefer only to see ads for the (more) democratic Latin-American nations such as Costa Rica, Venezuela, or Mexico.

Culbreth Sudler Jr.
Los Angeles, California

Effete snobbery

To the editors:

I would like to respond to your editorial vendetta against Jimmy Carter ("Anti-Carter vs. Anti-Kennedy," *TNR*, April 5). Edward Kennedy lacks the competence and integrity to be president, and the public is aware of this. Ronald Reagan is less competent than Kennedy, and Carter's campaign will make the public aware of this. It will take a disaster to defeat Carter, and this is highly unlikely considering Carter's cautious nature and demonstrated coolness under fire.

(continued on page 40)

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expensive piece of equipment which will last many years; it spreads that cost, in its books, over the machine's expected lifetime, subtracting a fraction each year until the machine wears out. This is standard accounting practice in computing profits, and the government uses the same practice in computing the tax on profits. Or at least, it did at first. Over the past 18 years, a series of "reforms" has introduced a dizzying array of special depreciation rules. First came "accelerated" depreciation under a variety of complicated formulas and situations. These rules permit businesses to deduct more of the cost early on, rather than equal fractions each year. Then came rules setting the "lifetimes" of various items for tax purposes; these generally are shorter than the time the items really last, meaning that tax deductions come earlier than actual accounting cost. Finally, there is the "investment tax credit." The government, in effect, pays 10 percent of the cost of certain kinds of machinery and equipment, by allowing businesses to subtract it from their taxes.

All three of these reforms were supposed to encourage business investment by giving investors a tax break. The taxes the business postpones by deducting depreciation earlier rather than later amount to an interest-free loan from the government. Watch out when businessmen describe such arrangements in terms of "cash flow," and argue that taxes are only deferred, not avoided. "Cash flow" means money; and the deferral effect is precisely what makes the arrangement so charming for them. The investment tax credit is an undisguised gift from the government. It, too, is supposed to encourage investment. But the gift usually helps pay for investments that would happen anyway. As a result, for every dollar the government gives up by the tax credit, there is less than a dollar of new investment. (See "Credit Where Credit Isn't Due," *TNR*, April 22, 1978.) Most studies peg the return at about 50 cents. It's not a logical way to stimulate investment. The taxpayers would get more new investment per dollar spent if the government invested directly, and then the taxpayers would get the profits as well. But of course that would be socialism.

Now, in the name of supply-side economics, it is proposed to consolidate and expand all these generous depreciation rules. Democratic representative James R. Jones and Republican Barber Conable have introduced a bill written by the American Council for Capital Formation. This group, an instrument of business lobbyist *extraordinaire* Charls E. Walker, designed the successful 1978 capital gains cut.

The "Jones-Conable Cost Recovery Act,"—"10-5-3" to its friends—would permit depreciation of all business assets, no matter what their real useful lives, in 10 years for buildings, five years for machinery, and three years for cars and trucks. Depreciation would be accelerated, so that most of the deductions would come in the early years. The investment tax credit would be expanded. Supporters say these changes would greatly simplify the rules, reduce distortions caused by inflation, and stimulate investment.

Making investment more profitable will stimulate investment, no doubt. But that is the beginning of analysis, not the end. The issue is how much, of what sort, and at what cost. The Treasury Department estimates that 10-5-3 ultimately would amount to cutting the corporate income tax by almost half. The revenue loss to the government would be more than $40 billion in 1984, and more than $80 billion in 1989. Would more generous depreciation greatly increase investment? Ordinarily, supply-siders are very fond of international comparisons. In West Germany, the rule for most assets is straight-line depreciation over the entire lifetime. No funny stuff. Japan's depreciation rules are almost as tough. The industrial nation with the most generous depreciation rules is—surprise—Great Britain, which allows immediate deduction of the entire cost of equipment and half the cost of buildings. This is the ultimate in accelerated depreciation. Great Britain's rate of fixed investment has been slightly higher than ours, and half that of Japan.

Immediate deduction makes the ordinary return on capital investment *tax-free*. (The value of the government's free loan exactly equals the tax you have to pay on your investment profits.) Yet 10-5-3, combined with the investment tax credit, would give some investments a better tax break than immediate deduction. In effect there would be a negative income tax on investment profits: the government would be paying businesses to make money. Is American capitalism really so moribund that this kind of stimulus is necessary?

Business Week has called 10-5-3 "the best shelter opportunity to come along in years . . . a tax bonanza for real estate speculators." Why? The key to tax shelters is converting ordinary income into capital gains and deferring the tax through depreciation. (See "Rich Man's Loophole," *TNR*, December 3, 1977.) Supply-side tax-cutters—ostensibly interested in raising tax receipts by stimulating productive investment—actually are draining away tax revenues and diverting money into uneconomic investments that "produce" only lower tax bills for the affluent.

Defenders of 10-5-3 are correct that the present system is overly complex and distorted by inflation. A business that builds a factory with 1968 dollars and then gets deductions in 1969 through 1989 dollars is getting gypped. But in almost every case the tax benefits from acceleration and the investment credit already exceed the tax penalty imposed by inflation. Furthermore, a Harvard professor named Dale Jorgenson has come up with a clever way to correct for inflation and simplify the whole system. Jorgenson would permit businesses to deduct, in the year an asset is purchased, the present value of its entire lifetime of depreciation, discounted at a "real" rate of interest (say, four percent) that didn't reflect inflation. For example, someone who spent $100 on a machine expected to last

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10 years might get to deduct $81.11—the present value of $10 a year for 10 years. If the investment was a building lasting 40 years, the deduction would be $49.48—the present value of $2.50 a year for 40 years. This scheme would end the inflation problem; eliminate complex calculations and mountainous records; and reduce hundreds of pages of tax regulations to a short list of numbers.

So why don't the business lobbyists support Jorgenson's plan, which would guarantee them fair treatment for their investments and would greatly simplify the tax code? Because they want more than fair treatment and—truth to tell—aren't all that eager for a simplified tax code. These beasts feel at home in the dense jungle, where they can maneuver easily but outsiders are trapped and blinded by the foliage. A straightforward proposal to slash the corporate income tax by 50 percent would not get too far in Congress, but some version of the Jones-Conable 10-5-3 plan likely will pass in this session.

The real problem with the way this country taxes the return on capital—corporate profits, capital gains, dividends, savings interest—is not that the rates are too high, but that they are too inconsistent. A properly designed tax system should have no effect at all on the accumulation and allocation of capital. Right now the system encourages some bad investments and discourages some good ones. It protects established enterprises and prevents the flow of capital to where it can be used most productively. It also has a built-in overall prejudice in favor of consumption over saving and investment. This is bad, but the reverse prejudice—which also exists in some cases—also is bad. Artificial subsidies to capital encourage businesses to replace people with machines, when an unbiased economic calculation would save those jobs.

Straightening out the present mess would permit a drastic lowering of marginal tax rates. If the supply-side types were serious about unleashing the power of capitalism, here are some of the tax reforms they would support:

—Eliminate the investment tax credit and adopt the Jorgenson plan for depreciation of capital assets. The tax credit skews investment decisions because it applies only to certain things. It makes some irrational investments profitable, while generating less total new investment than it costs the government in lost revenue. The Jorgenson plan would simplify one of the most complicated parts of the tax code, and prevent inflation from artificially increasing the tax on long-term investments.

—Eliminate the corporate income tax, but tax shareholders on the retained earnings of their corporations. Right now corporations pay tax on their entire profits, then shareholders pay tax on the portion that is paid out in dividends. Conservatives complain correctly that this amounts to a "double tax" on dividends, and therefore is an unfair burden on capital. But the arrangement also skews capital allocation by encouraging corporations to retain earnings and invest them internally. This gives stodgy old companies an advantage they don't deserve. If investors paid the same tax on profits whether they removed them from the firm or not, they would make this decision on a more rational basis.

—Eliminate the special treatment for capital gains. The distinction between capital gains and other kinds of investment profit is a irrational one, and taxing one kind of profit much less than others badly skews investment decisions. Like the present corporate income tax, special treatment for capital gains artificially encourages retained earnings, thus protecting stodgy managements from the rigors of the capital markets. The capital gains rules also divert hundreds of millions of dollars every year from productive investments into tax shelters.

—Correct the tax on capital gains and interest for inflation. When inflation is running at 13 percent and

Crop Report

Soviet Predicts Bumper Grain Harvest and Thwarting of U. S. Embargo

MOSCOW, April 13—Spring planting has begun in the southern areas of European Russia under the spur of official urgings aimed at overcoming the effects of President Carter's cutback on grain shipments to the Soviet Union.

According to the Soviet press, initial reports from the field point to a good grain harvest in the fall, large enough to avert any serious decline in meat production because of a shortage of feed grains. . . .

Allowing for the inspirational gloss that is a part of virtually all production forecasts, Western agricultural specialists tend to agree that the prospects are more favorable today than might have been expected when the grain embargo was announced Jan. 4. . . .

—*The New York Times*, April 14

Poor Soviet Harvest, Cut in Meat Supply Seen Likely for Fall

MOSCOW (AP)—The Russian winter hung on with a vengeance this year, seriously delaying spring planting. This could produce another poor Soviet harvest next fall and cut further into the meager supply of meat for Soviet consumers.

Western agriculture experts said snow still blankets rich fields in the northern Ukraine, where planting normally would be proceeding at a rate of thousands of acres a day.

Recently released Soviet agriculture figures confirmed the gloomy prospect for the spring planting season. . . .

—*The Wall Street Journal*, April 14

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someone earns seven percent on money in a savings account it is larcenous to tax away a chunk of this as "profit." Likewise if someone buys a share of stock and sells it a year later for 10 percent more (though the pain here is muted by the capital gains loophole). It's hard to encourage savings when the real after-tax return is negative, which is the case today for all investments available to ordinary people.

—Permit "tax-free rollover accounts" for individual savers. This idea of the supply-side crowd has a lot of merit, if limited in size and combined with other, less pleasant nostrums. Right now taxes on dividends and interest must be paid every year, even if the money is reinvested; but the tax on the capital gains needn't be paid until the asset is sold and the gain is "realized." This biases investment decisions in two ways: in favor of capital gains, because the tax is deferred; and against changing investments, because cashing in the old one brings a tax on the profits (the "lock-in" effect). "Tax-free rollover" would let taxpayers make investments, and also change them, without paying any tax until the profits were withdrawn from the account for consumption. This would end the bias between forms of investment, and also encourage saving generally. Keogh and IRA accounts are primitive forms of such a procedure, but they are needlessly restrictive.

—Tax capital gains at death. This is another obscure provision of the tax code whose very obscurity protects a giant loophole. (See "How the Rich Stay Rich," *TNR*, December 9, 1978.) Capital gains on property people own when they die escape tax completely. Heirs pay taxes only on the rise in value since they inherited the property. This loophole saves the very wealthy far more than the estate tax costs them. It also creates a "lock-in" effect on older investors who hold onto investments to avoid the tax, even when a redirection of their capital would be more productive. Congress closed this loophole in 1976, requiring heirs to pay the tax on profits since the asset was bought, rather than since they inherited it. Then Congress lost its nerve. The loophole was reopened in an amendment to the windfall profits tax bill (put there to make it veto-proof). Lobbyists for the rich argued that the change would create an inefficient "lock-in" effect on the heirs, and also would require burdensome record-keeping. Taxing capital gains at death would solve both lock-in problems, and would greatly simplify the bookkeeping. Like the Jorgenson plan for depreciation, simplicity is its virtue, and also (for those affected) its vice.

—End the personal interest deduction, including the deduction for home mortgages. This subsidy to consumption, and to consumer borrowing, discourages savings and sucks up money that otherwise would be available for productive investment. Inflation makes this effect much worse. Even at record-high nominal interest rates, borrowers—just like savers—face negative real after-tax interest. Society is paying people to borrow money, and charging them to save it: not a sensible arrangement. It also is not fair. Thanks to the mortgage interest deduction, a typical couple making $18,000 a year with a 16 percent mortgage pays an after-tax rate of 12.72 percent, while a couple making $50,000 with the same mortgage pays, after deductions, only 9.09 percent. The poor cannot afford houses and mortgages at all—they rent. (See "Middle Class Loophole," *TNR*, December 3, 1977.) Deductions of home mortgage interest and property taxes will cost the federal government $24 billion in the next fiscal year.

—Crack down on consumption disguised as business expenses. Huge amounts of consumption by the privileged—fancy meals, private planes, and so on—occur only because they can masquerade as business expenses and therefore are tax-free. A flat ban on business entertainment might eliminate some expenditures that are competitively useful to individual businesses, but it would touch almost no expense that can lead to a productive gain for society. Meanwhile, it would eliminate an enormous bias in the system in favor of consumption and against saving.

Encouraging saving and investment over consumption is what the supply-siders say they want. Will they come out against the three-martini lunch? Somehow it doesn't seem likely. They don't want to reform the tax system by ending all the aspects that discourage productivity. They simply want to lower taxes for the interests they represent. The same may be said of their other great campaigns, against regulation and social welfare. Here, too, liberals should take some of the complaints seriously, but remain skeptical about the proposed cures. We turn to those issues next week.

Politics

Teddy's Last Hope

Even if Edward Kennedy wins the Pennsylvania primary on April 22 and the Michigan caucuses the following Saturday, it is next to impossible for him to overcome President Carter's commanding delegate lead and win the Democratic nomination. The Kennedy campaign is close to conceding this point. So why is Kennedy still running? Because, say the candidate and some of his top aides, it is still possible that the August convention will revolt against the prospect of nominating Jimmy Carter, change the party rules, and pick Kennedy (or somebody else) instead. On examination, this scenario, too, is highly implausible. So why is Kennedy staying in the race? Because, it appears, Kennedy now is launched on an ideological crusade on behalf of traditional liberalism and against the infidel king, Jimmy Carter. Kennedy himself seems to know his quest is quixotic: the song they play at his campaign rallies isn't "Camelot," but "The Impossible Dream."

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When will the Kennedy campaign cease to be idealistic and turn dangerous to the Democratic party's prospects in November? Teddy Kennedy ought to do some hard thinking on the subject—and soon.

When the Pennsylvania primary is over, the Democratic party will have chosen 49 percent of its delegates, meaning the race will be only half over. But in the states preceding Pennsylvania, Carter has won 65 percent of the delegates. Kennedy would have to do better than that in the remaining states to have a chance at the convention, and it's all but certain that he can't.

Pennsylvania illustrates why. It is a big, urban-industrial state with above-average unemployment, lots of blacks, Catholics, and ethnics. It's in the East and the mayor of its biggest city has endorsed Kennedy. If Kennedy is going to score a big victory anywhere, it ought to be in Pennsylvania. Yet the most optimistic polls for Kennedy (which are, in fact, those conducted by the Carter campaign) show Kennedy ahead by only three points in the popular vote. If Kennedy actually wins by 10 points, 55-45, it will be good for morale, political momentum, and fundraising, but it will not help much with his delegate deficit. If Democratic rules provided for proportional allocation of delegates by statewide popular vote, Kennedy still would be short of the 65 percent victory he needs to begin catching Carter. In fact, however, the rules provide for proportional allocation by congressional district—and are designed to favor losers, rather than winners.

Most congressional districts around the country send four, five, or six delegates to the convention. In a four-delegate district, it doesn't make much difference whether the winning candidate wins by 50.1 percent or 62 percent; the delegates get split two-and-two. It takes a 62.5 percent victory for the winner to get three delegates out of such a district. The same principle applies in larger districts—the winner has to wipe out the loser in popular votes in order to sweep the delegates by better than three-to-two or three-to-three. The upshot, even if Kennedy wins Pennsylvania by 55-45, is that he won't get 55 percent of its delegates. And again, he needs more than 65 percent.

Actually, Kennedy needs a lot more than 65 percent in the Pennsylvanias, Ohios, Californias, and New Jerseys of this country, because the second half of the campaign also contains such states as Texas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Kentucky, where Carter presumably will win. On the very same day that television is focusing on Pennsylvania, for example, there will be 77 delegates chosen in caucuses in Missouri. If Kennedy gets 20 more than Carter in Pennsylvania, the chances are that Carter can beat Kennedy by more than that in Missouri, and emerge from the day with his lead enhanced.

It's instructive to look at how Carter got so far ahead. In the first place, Carter shellacked Kennedy in the South, and Kennedy could not do the same to Carter in Kennedy's native Northeast. In Georgia, Carter got 62 delegates to Kennedy's one; in Massachusetts, Kennedy got 77 delegates, but Carter won 34. In New York, Kennedy's big victory got him 164 delegates; Carter still picked up 118. In Alabama the score was Carter, 43, Kennedy, 2; in South Carolina, 27-0; Mississippi, 30-0 with two uncommitted; Florida, 74-25-1; Louisiana, 39-12, and Virginia, 59-5. The second half of the nominating race involves no region in which Kennedy can hope to win the kind of victories that Carter scored during the first half in the South.

Carter will not have won this nomination just with a southern sweep, either. According to Carter's chief delegate-counter, Tom Donilon, the campaign targeted two other big sources of delegates: the caucus states and Illinois. Illinois is the big exception to the Democratic party's rules. Its "loophole" primary provides for direct election of delegates, rather than apportionment in accordance with the popular vote for president within congressional districts. "Here," said Donilon, "was the potential for a winner-take-all situation, as nowhere else. If you picked the right delegate candidates in a district, you could win all six of them, not just two or three, as in other states." The Carter campaign evidently picked the right candidates. Carter won the meaningless Illinois beauty contest by two to one, but he won in delegates by 164-16. In the 21 caucus states a limited expenditure of money and organizational effort can pay greater dividends than in primary states, according to Donilon, and has done so for the Carter campaign. Carter has beaten Kennedy by 62 percent to 38 percent in the primaries, but 74-16 in the caucuses, with 10 percent of the delegates uncommitted.

Part of Kennedy's last-minute catch-up strategy is to raid Carter's delegate reserves in caucus states. Party rules in these states differ, but often delegates elected at precinct caucuses and county caucuses are not bound to any presidential candidate, but may be wooed away—despite a stated preference—until chosen at the congressional district level. Kennedy aides look with some hope, for example, at recent signs of slippage away from Carter in Iowa, where Representative Tom Harkin is leading a revolt against the administration's failure to support farm prices. However, Donilon claims there is little evidence of defections elsewhere. In fact, he says, in every other state Carter has at least maintained—and in some cases, increased—his level of support as caucus action moved from the precincts to higher levels.

So the prospects, barring a complete collapse of the Carter presidency, are that Kennedy may gain somewhat on Carter in the second half of the campaign, but will still trail badly when the primary process is over in early June. In their fantasies, the Kennedy people say that the nomination is still attainable even against these odds. The scenario goes more or less as follows: Carter is ahead in delegates, but Kennedy has swept the big urban state primaries, particularly California, Ohio,

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and New Jersey on June 3. As the August convention approaches, the evils and ineptitudes of the Carter presidency become irredeemably obvious to the nation. Inflation and interest rates are up to 30 percent and/or mass unemployment in housing and auto industries is spreading throughout the economy. The hostages are still in Iran, and maybe the Russians are, too. (Or alternatively, the hostages and the Russians are home, leaving Americans free to think about the economy.) Ronald Reagan is the Republican nominee, has picked Howard Baker as his running mate, and the Republicans are far ahead of Carter in the polls. Carter is a certain loser, but the polls show Kennedy a winner. Under these circumstances, Carter delegates bolt from their commitment and nominate Kennedy.

The Kennedy people have figured out how to bring their fantasies to life. In the convention rules committee, Kennedy forces would push for elimination of Section 11 (H) of the Delegate Selection Rules for the 1980 convention, which states, "All delegates to the national convention shall be bound to vote for the presidential candidate whom they were elected to support for at least the first convention ballot, unless released in writing by the presidential candidate." The Kennedy forces do not expect Carter to quit, no matter what a botch he has made of the country. Nor do they expect to win in the rules committee, which will be dominated by Carter loyalists. They would submit a minority report in the rules committee, and when the rules committee report comes up for a vote on the convention floor Tuesday night, August 12, the delegates will vote to eliminate Rule 11(H), thus unbinding themselves from Carter and allowing the convention to make a free choice for Kennedy, or possibly someone else.

Unfortunately, there are problems with this plan. One is that Rule 11(H) also empowers a presidential candidate to replace any delegate seeking to violate his binding commitment at any time up to the presidential balloting. Carter would certainly put down a rebellion prior to the rules vote by replacing would-be defectors with alternate delegates.

There is also an important flaw in the political logic behind the rules move. Even if polls in August make Carter look like a sure loser, the chances are that Kennedy would look even more hopeless. At the moment, for example, Reagan is catching up to Carter in the polls, but Kennedy is far behind. Still, Kennedy staffers say they can persuade delegates that Carter will lose the South to Reagan and the industrial North, too, while Kennedy could at least hold the North. But such electoral vote tallies, while plausible, do not make Kennedy a certain winner—that is, someone for whom delegates would be willing to break a solemn commitment.

And Rule 11(H) does embody a solemn commitment. In 20 states it represents a legal requirement, too. The Kennedy people say that the Supreme Court's famous 1972 decision, *Cousins v. Wigoda*, declares that national convention rules supersede state laws. But state laws—and the possibility that voters would use them to sue the delegates—would probably serve as a restraining influence on Carter delegates tempted to violate the terms under which they were elected.

Within the Democratic party, Rule 11(H) is the product of 12 years of reform efforts—spearheaded, ironically, by some of the Kennedy aides who are now seeking to do away with it. Starting after the 1968 Chicago convention, the reformers sought to eliminate the influence of party bosses and democratize the nominating process by giving increased power to primary voters. Rule 11(H) is specifically designed to insure that delegates carry out the will of the voters, rather than become seduced or cajoled by party leaders at the convention. When I asked Kennedy aide Rick Stearns about the inconsistency in his positions, he said somewhat sheepishly, "In my maturer years, I've come to appreciate the value of having the convention exercise a deliberative function." But Carter partisans are likely to claim that the Kennedy people are merely trying to change the rules—and their own convictions—for reasons of political expediency. And their argument is likely to wash with many convention delegates.

Finally, any Kennedy effort to change the nominating rules at the last minute will have to be carried out in full view of 50 million television viewers who are also likely voters. Jimmy Carter would be sure to resist the theft of his nomination with every political weapon at his command. The resulting television spectacle would probably rival *Caligula* for bloodletting, and would probably doom the Democratic party in November. In arguing for a convention revolt, one of Kennedy's top aides, former Wisconsin governor Patrick Lucey, said that "a political party doesn't usually commit suicide on purpose in broad daylight." But that is what it might well do if Kennedy pushes his challenge to the bitter end.

Should Kennedy quit? Well, not yet, certainly. He still has a small chance to beat Carter. But if it develops that Pennsylvania, Michigan, Texas, Colorado, and Indiana—the late-April, early-May events—do not produce the big victories he needs, he ought to at least start thinking about deactivating his candidacy. If Kennedy fights on through June and July and into New York in August—the ultimate in quixoticism—it is likely to distract the Carter campaign from general election planning, and is certain to divert energies from state and local fundraising which new election law amendments permit on an unlimited basis for certain kinds of presidential-support operations. An all-out battle at the convention could make 1980 another 1968. At some point, Kennedy has to remember what Richard Nixon did to the country, and what Ronald Reagan might do.

Morton Kondracke

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The Rose Garden non-campaign.

Selling Jimmy

After Ted Kennedy's unexpectedly good showing in the Maine caucuses Jimmy Carter was nervous. Although Carter was riding high in the media polls, his own pollster, Patrick Caddell, produced an internal poll which showed that the president's lead in New Hampshire had slipped precipitously to only four points. "New Hampshire almost came apart for us," says Caddell. "Kennedy had a shot the week after Maine. Since December the election hasn't been reflected in the media polls. You couldn't tell that the people were moving, except very deep down."

Caddell's polls, designed to measure the slightest palpitation in the body politic, received an early distant warning in New Hampshire. The pollster knew how to remedy the ailment: the president's advertising was immediately altered. "Our media was specifically geared to the people who were going to defect—the doves," observes Caddell. "They had lost the sense that Carter was for peace." "President Jimmy Carter: Peacemaker," blared the new commercials. He was depicted at the Camp David summit with Anwar Sadat and Menahem Begin. "More than most presidents in recent time, the president has been a peacemaker, and he has not forgotten that we are still the last, best hope on earth," intoned the narrator. Although the ad was about the Mideast it was intended to address another problem. "There was a huge impact of the Mideast spots on soft voters," Caddell says, "It reminded them that Carter was not going to send the country to war. We went from four points up to 11 points, and that's where we stayed." With the Carter campaign, very little should be accepted at face value. As Pat Caddell says, recalling the media blitz that rescued New Hampshire for the president, "No one ever knew anything was going on."

President Carter is running a state-of-the-art political campaign. He has dispensed with old-fashioned customs like venturing out to shake voters' hands and has campaigned instead solely from the lofty pedestal of television with the White House as backdrop. "If you could put any candidate away and not see him it would be a lot easier for the media people," says Harry Muheim, copywriter of the Carter commercials. The Carter campaign has removed itself from the usual political discourse; the president's surrogates have even suggested that anyone who believes his campaign is actually a campaign is unpatriotic, an idea that embellishes Carter's politics of anti-politics.

The president's advertising, however, has been extensive. During the first week of April, 127 different spots were aired on his behalf, according to the office of his media adviser, Gerald Rafshoon. There have been 50 radio ads, 45 30-second television ads, 28 one-minute television ads, three five-minute television ads, and one 30-minute documentary. Carter also uses

drawing by Vint Lawrence

opportunities such as press conferences, speeches to visitors, and greeting the US Winter Olympic team at the White House to reinforce his campaign themes while retaining a stance ostensibly above politics. "People who understand the media are at the core of the campaign," says Robert Squier, a media consultant who's worked on the Carter race. "Rafshoon understands it, Jody Powell understands it, Carter understands it, and Pat Caddell is a media freak. He has involved himself very heavily in media. He's very good, very sophisticated."

The themes of the Carter campaign have much more to do with who Carter is than with what he has accomplished. One of his ads states: "A man brings two things to a presidential campaign. He brings his record and he brings himself. In the voting booth, the voter must weigh both record and character before deciding." But Carter uses his record mainly to highlight his trustworthy personal qualities. More than anything else, he wants voters to know that he is indeed the president and that he is a man of high moral character. These obvious ideas are part of a less obvious plan.

Carter's media campaign began before the seizure of American hostages in Iran and before Kennedy's declaration of candidacy. In mid-October 1979, Robert Squier spent four days inside the White House shooting film of Jimmy Carter in action. Squier had prepared a seven-page memorandum on the film's intent, which was read by the president. "He understood what we wanted to do," says Squier. But before Squier let the cameras roll he conferred with Pat Caddell. "We had a

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couple of conversations," he notes. "His polls confirmed my feelings." (In 1976 Squier produced the final Carter television spot, a half-hour commercial in which Carter responded to taped questions put to him by voters. "Caddell told me they were having trouble with women," says Squier. "On the basis of Caddell's suggestion I put a lot of women in the show.")

Squier's half-hour White House documentary was broadcast as the first salvo in the 1980 Carter media barrage. "You could have put a joke title on that film: *I Am the President*," says Squier. "It put Carter in a light people hadn't seen before. By pure luck of the draw, as the crises occurred, Carter adopted the policy of staying in the White House." Seven five-minute ads were culled from the Squier effort, some of them aimed at Ted Kennedy.

Much of the Carter advertising neatly undercuts Kennedy without any reference to him. The campaign emphasizes the president's positive qualities, which voters may perceive the senator to lack. "Kennedy's problem is one of character, and Carter's great advantage is character," says Squier. "What you have is a classic. You can make an invidious comparison with Kennedy on the positive side. I think the positive/negative thing is the central dynamic. But the Carter people have to make sure they don't go over the line and make Kennedy a sympathetic figure. They almost did that in New Hampshire." Squier is referring to a Carter ad that portrayed the candidate with his wife and then with his daughter, as the narrator discussed how being a good husband and father was essential to being a good president, a positively "invidious comparison."

The Carter inner circle expected Ted Kennedy to run long before he announced, and they believed that the Kennedy team was far behind them in media and polling skills. Still, Carter's aides have been surprised by Kennedy's extensive failures. "I've been mind-boggled by that campaign," says one top Carter adviser. "If you consider every strategic decision they've made since December they've literally done the wrong thing without exception. And when I saw Kennedy's ads they made me feel embarrassed. To have Ethel and Rose talking about him—it's so maudlin."

Carter's ads, you can be sure, will not include a testimonal from brother Billy. They are geared to the moment; every spot has a particular purpose. Carter's campaign counters the public perception of his incompetence by exploiting the trappings of the presidency, and deflects Kennedy's challenge with paeans to Carter's personal morality. "There's a lot Carter hasn't done well, but you don't say that in a spot," says Harry Muheim, Carter's advertising copywriter. "In a kind of subliminal way you develop a sense of what's appropriate to do about the candidate. It's not like product advertising. This kind of advertising is designed to make people think. Like so much in politics it's heavily laden with symbolism. One of the reasons I like Rafshoon is that he understands the essential nature of political advertising, which is to understate the situation. For example, a point we wanted to make is that Carter's been working all his life. If anyone wants to draw a comparison to Kennedy that's all right."

Muheim narrates the spot he wrote: "The visuals come from Squier's film. We see Carter in a variety of situations in the White House. Then we have some narration: 'He's a man who's worked hard all his life and he's still at it today. The decisions he makes today go out of this room and reach millions of people. It's a lot different than driving a tractor across a hot Georgia field, but it's still work.' Now, that's a quietly stated idea." It is the quintessential 1980 Carter ad, superficially prosaic while its logic convinces voters "in a kind of subliminal way," as Muheim puts it.

"Our slogan is 'A Solid Man in a Sensitive Job,'" Muheim says. "It's not too fancy. And that slogan would be as good against Ronald Reagan as Ted Kennedy. We're not running a vindictive or sly campaign. I really do think Carter is a solid man in a sensitive job. It's my slogan. I made it up. I don't believe we've been exploitative about the senator."

Sidney Blumenthal

Sidney Blumenthal is the author of *The Permanent Campaign*, a book about political consultants, to be published in May by Beacon Press.

Parroting the US line.

The Media's Mideast

Since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the US news media's track record in assessing the Arab-Israeli peace process has been miserable. This was especially clear during the 16 months between President Anwar Sadat's historic trip to Jerusalem in November 1977 and the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty in Washington in March 1979. Now the same gloom-and-doom editorializing is surfacing again in coverage of the autonomy talks. And the anonymous US officials who served up planeloads of misinformation between 1977 and 1979 are once again spoon-feeding the best and brightest of the American media, who in turn are dutifully shoveling it into their columns and broadcasts.

The repeated failures of the news media to understand the forces at play in the Middle East are certainly reflections of "pack journalism" at its worst. But when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict, an even more serious flaw in the media's news gathering process comes into play. Too many reporters rely almost

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exclusively on the so-called Middle East "experts" at the State Department and the White House who themselves don't really have a good grasp of developments and trends in that part of the world. These are the same people who couldn't foresee the shah's downfall and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, who pushed for the ill-fated October 1, 1977, US-Soviet joint communiqué on the Middle East, and who advised President Carter to send then-Middle East envoy Robert Strauss to Israel and Egypt last summer with a proposal to change UN Security Council Resolution 242. They are the same people, then, who later recommended an affirmative US vote on the later-repudiated UN resolution condemning Israel for all sorts of wrongs. Journalists only too willing to accept their offerings as the gospel truth cannot help but confuse the American public about the Middle East.

Because many top Washington journalists depend solely on administration officials for their understanding of the Middle East, it's no wonder they often lose patience with the slow pace of negotiations. This has been apparent since Sadat's trip to Jerusalem, which, incredible as it may sound, was not well received by many US "experts" because it forced the United States to abandon the then-popular all-or-nothing "comprehensive" approach in favor of a step-by-step formula. The unfortunate fact is that a significant number of officials at the State Department and among other Arabists at the National Security Council, the Pentagon, the intelligence community, and elsewhere in the US government happen to agree with former under secretary of state George Ball's disparaging view of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty.

Privately, these officials will tell you that American sponsorship of the treaty may have been a mistake, particularly in light of the developments in Iran and Afghanistan. By splitting the Arab and Moslem world, the treaty is said to have made it more difficult for the United States to rally support against the Soviet Union. But surely a peace treaty between the two most militarily powerful countries in the Middle East should not be regarded as a step backward. As former Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban recently wrote in the *Jerusalem Post*:

> Egypt is the only Arab state to have borne, together with Israel, the burden and loss of vast bereavement in all the Arab-Israeli wars. It is probable that over 100,000 lives were lost in these actions; and there is no way of guessing how many future deaths have been avoided by the peace treaty. The prospect of full-scale war has receded from the Arab-Israeli area.

Responding to Ball and other critics of the peace treaty, Eban commented:

> There is something intellectually grotesque in the damnation by faint praise that has come from so many governments, international agencies and commentators in recent months. Kafka and George Orwell in their moments of darkest fantasy would not have dared to portray an international peace organization condemning a peace treaty that put an end to three decades of repeated violence between member states. Yet scarcely a month passes without a UN organ or a 'non-aligned' conference lending itself to such an absurdity. It used to be held that the greatest international transgression was to make war. In the current doctrine, the greatest Middle Eastern crime is to make peace in what the 'experts' regard as the wrong order.

These views echo Sadat's own.

Privately, there would be many smiles, snickers, and I-told-you-so's among the Arabists in the US government if the dragging Palestinian autonomy negotiations did in fact collapse and the peace treaty began to unravel. Then the United States could wind the clock back to 1977 and seek a reconvened Geneva Peace Conference where a comprehensive agreement could be pursued—but almost certainly not achieved. So it should come as no surprise that the media seems eager for signs of the collapse of the autonomy talks. But those predicting disaster and the automatically accompanying "crunch" in US-Israeli relations have been wrong so many times in the past that their credibility has worn thin.

Manipulating the news media has been a tradition of statecraft for many years. Beyond their own biased perceptions of reality, administration officials often have clear interest in evoking the direst scenarios. For tactical purposes, such dark predictions automatically tend to put increased pressure on the other negotiators to make more concessions. This is exactly what happened just before President Carter managed to wrap up the final details of the peace treaty during his swing through Israel and Egypt last year. US officials recognized that the instant analyses of a breakdown in the negotiations would probably spur Begin and Sadat to go the extra mile in offering last-minute concessions. "Summit Ending—No Sign of Accord" was the headline on Sunday morning, September 17, 1978, in the *Washington Star*, the same day that Carter, Sadat, and Begin announced their "framework" agreement. The identical thing happened on the eve of the Camp David signing.

Thus, on Tuesday, March 13, 1979, the same day that Carter successfully concluded his final drive for the peace treaty, first with Begin in Jerusalem and later with Sadat at the Cairo airport, the *Washington's Post*'s lead headline read: "Carter Trip Nears End Without Treaty." Correspondents William Claiborne and Martin Schram reported:

> President Carter's dramatic Middle East initiative neared its end tonight with no plan for signing or initialing an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and with unresolved issues still remaining.
>
> White House officials, decidedly downcast, announced that the President and his entourage will return to Washington Tuesday without the accord and with no agreed procedures for continuing the attempts to get one.

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In an editorial that same day, the *Post* rushed to judgment. Based on the premature reports of apparent failure, the newspaper defended Carter's efforts by insisting that "there was no solid basis for expecting a signed treaty from his mission." The *New York Times* headline was not much better: "Treaty Outlook Dim." Hedrick Smith built a lengthy, front-page "news analysis" on one administration official's opinions of the unfolding "debacle." He noted that "the Americans seem to sense that, as the prospect of final agreement nears, each side shrinks from it."

All three television networks as well as the major wire services were equally dismal in their forecasts. When one television anchorman was cautioned against going overly hard in predicting a failure in the negotiations, he shot back: "What kind of drugs are you taking?"

Time magazine also had good reason to be embarrassed. For months it had its readers believing that the negotiations were about to break down. Ever since Begin's election in May 1977, *Time* had consistently refused to credit the Israeli premier with any flexibility in negotiations with Israel's Arab neighbors. Before Carter took off for Egypt and Israel, *Time* charged, Begin had "made it clear that he was not planning any concessions to anyone, anywhere, under any pressure." Its March 12 headline: "No Spirit of Camp David." Its March 19 issue, which had actually gone to press on Sunday, March 11, again offered the same assessment. Begin had "just about ruled out any new concessions," it said. And it is saying much the same now, as if the May 26 target date was midnight for the entire peace process.

Time, however, was not alone in its jaundiced assessment of Begin, whose name, it gratuitously told its readers, rhymes with Fagin. The Israeli leader was misjudged generally by senior US officials and the American news media from the day he took office. Almost instantly, there were predictions of a fifth Arab-Israeli war because of Begin's election. Following a visit to the Middle East by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in August 1977, for example, the *Washington Post*'s diplomatic correspondent, Don Oberdorfer, concluded there was "a hint of renewed military conflict in years to come." He said that Begin's failure "to show any hint of present or future accommodation on fundamental issues involving Palestinians frustrated Vance's efforts and sharply diminished the chances for a comprehensive Middle East settlement so long as Begin is in power."

Syndicated columnist Carl T. Rowan's articles on the Arab-Israeli conflict have left so much to be desired that he would be wise to suspend his analysis of this subject altogether and focus instead on other areas where he stands a better chance of avoiding public embarrassment. Even before Begin took office, Rowan's predictions have included the same recurring themes: Israel is to blame for any momentary impasse in the negotiations; US-Israeli relations are on a collision course because of Israeli obduracy; without additional Israeli flexibility, another war is inevitable and US national interests will suffer.

Rowan has had plenty of company in his misreading of the situation in the Middle East, although few have been as wrong so often. The *Washington Post*'s Stephen S. Rosenfeld wrote just prior to Carter's 11th-hour mission to the Middle East: "As Jimmy Carter and Menahem Begin go into their fateful talks, the peace they and Anwar Sadat have ached to grasp seems to be slipping from their hands. A mood of great sadness, of heaviness, of inevitable disappointment and tragedy is settling over what promised to be, just a few months ago, one of the grand adventures of the human spirit and of public striving." Similarly, Georgie Anne Geyer, reflecting the attitudes of the Arabists who oppose a "separate" Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty, commented in the *Chicago Sun-Times* on March 2, 1979:

> In the beginning, the Camp David ideas seemed sound. But times change. . . . I have to voice the sobering fear that events in the Middle East are moving too fast to freeze the situation any more in this mold. Sometimes it is valorous to settle—at least temporarily—for the status quo, the old but workable 'no war, no peace' formula.

Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway of the *Village Voice* concluded six months before the signing of the Camp David agreements: "Two things are now clear: that there can be no fundamental progress toward a peace settlement without a resolution of Israel's internal political crisis; and this, at the very least, implies the fall of Begin."

As Israel, Egypt, and the United States now head into a new stage of autonomy negotiations, there will be many more predictions of certain catastrophe. These will echo the previous grim forecasts: there can be no separate agreement between Egypt and Israel; if Egypt makes a separate agreement with Israel, Sadat won't last. And, of course, the administration will blame Begin for not conceding even more than Sadat wants: the Israeli premier always has to be the one standing in the way of progress. "Outlook Gloomy as Carter Meets Begin," warned a headline in the *Washington Star*. Noting that Carter's summit with Begin followed an earlier session with Sadat, *Time*'s headline read: "Now Comes the Hard Part." Aware that Israel is especially sensitive to criticism in the US news media, the State Department was once again turning on the press—against Israel.

The talks are not likely to fail. Sadat, Begin, and Carter all have a strong common interest in success. Even if the May 26 target date will not be met, the talks will nevertheless continue in the weeks and, if necessary, months thereafter. Remember, Israel and Egypt had to continue their final peace treaty negotiations for three months beyond the deadline initially set at Camp David.

Despite all his publicity, Sadat remains an enigma to US news people. His initial decision to travel to

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Jerusalem, as well as his performance in the negotiations since, have not been well understood. He has staked his entire political fortune and the fate of his country on the peace initiative. There is no reason for him to court defeat by demanding concessions from Israel which he knows it will not make and which he, in fact, would not want it to make. He has already won his significant victory: the return of Sinai and the extraction of Egyptian society from a painfully costly 30 years' war. He also has won some concessions for the Arabs of the West Bank, and he will win more. It is not his fault that they do not come forward to make the most of them.

Sadat will, of course, continue to complain about Israeli intransigence: this is still the language of Arab politics and the currency of negotiations. But he told reporters at Blair House that Egypt was willing to defer such sensitive issues as West Bank water sources and settlements until after the inhabitants of the territories elect their proposed self-governing authority. The Israelis won't concede much to Sadat on these vexing issues because they know he can't commit the Palestinians to reciprocal concessions. He said the Palestinians should discuss these issues directly with the Israelis. By dropping his earlier demands, Sadat signaled his determination to press ahead on matters where agreement is possible. He has patience, something one must learn if one wants to survive in the Middle East. This is a quality too many American journalists and their tutors in the foreign policy establishment apparently lack.

Wolf Blitzer

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While the US fiddles, the oil fields may burn.

Helpless in the Persian Gulf

by Deborah Shapley

Recent events in the region that Zbigniew Brzezinski named the "arc of crisis" a year ago have been pushing even liberals and moderates—already battered by the conservative assault on the SALT treaty and by the hostage crisis in Iran—to favor a stronger US military stance and increased defense spending. The Gallup Poll indicates how attitudes are changing: in 1974 it found that 44 percent of Americans wanted to decrease the defense budget and only 12 percent wanted an increase. But by January 1980, 49 percent favored increasing it.

But beyond agreement with the president's request for a 5.4 percent increase in the defense budget authorization for fiscal 1981, to $158.7 billion, there has been remarkably little discussion about the content of American military programs in the wake of the Iran crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. What would we do if the Soviets moved toward the oil fields of Iran, or southward across miles of Pakistani territory to the Indian Ocean, or if the Iraqis claimed irredentist—and oil rich—lands in Kuwait? Could we stop these moves? Would our allies do anything?

Traditionally, American defense policy has been organized around theaters in Central Europe and Korea. The Persian Gulf turmoil reminds us that between these theaters lies the entire Asian land mass, some of whose perimeter is crucial to Western interests, and in most of which we are unprepared to fight.

The administration recognized our vulnerability in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region as early as 1977, when a National Security Council memorandum recommended added troop commitments there. But nothing much was done. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, however, the president announced the Carter Doctrine. In his State of the Union address, he warned the Soviets: "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. It will be repelled by the use of any means necessary, including military force."

Carter also stepped up symbolic military gestures: demonstration flights of that old workhorse, the B-52, from bases in the Philippines to the Gulf area and back unrefueled; training exercises with the Egyptian Air Force, and the movement of aircraft carrier groups to the Indian Ocean. Chiefly, however, he has stepped up plans for the "Rapid Deployment Force" first proposed in 1977, which consists of a command structure to coordinate existing Marine, Army, Air Force, and Navy

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troops and equipment deemed not essential for other theaters that could move to the Persian Gulf in a hurry.

Finally, the administration began a diplomatic dervish dance with area governments that would have been funny if it did not reflect the region's genuine political frenzy. Whereas the president had turned down a request in 1977 from the sultan of Oman for protection when the British departed, Carter now courted Oman for use of the island of Massira, which is a short hop from the southern coast of Iran and the straits of Hormuz, through which pass half the world's oil tankers. But the diplomatic flurry—General Zia's snub of the president's $400 million aid package, Clark Clifford's entreaties to Indira Gandhi, Harold Brown's trip to China, and the failure to get the hostages out of Iran—amounted to little more than words.

The underlying truth is that the United States has very little in the way of military strength or allied help to back the Carter Doctrine; shortly after the president's speech, aides admitted as much, saying it was a plan for "the long haul." NATO's contingency plans do not include the Middle East, although Japan and France depend more on Persian Gulf oil than we do. The United States has no client state, now that the shah's has fallen, armed and at the ready to defend US "vital interests." Even reasonably friendly nations in the area, such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, won't allow US military bases on their soil, although they expect the United States to defend them in the event of attack. The political problems of having one of these states defend another are myriad: the Saudis are so mad at the Egyptians about the Camp David accords, for instance, that even if the United States arranged for the Egyptians to defend the Saudi oil fields, the Saudis might not allow it.

A great numbers game has begun in Washington about how many troops we can move in the Persian Gulf, how soon—it is as precise and consistent as roulette. Harold Brown said in a speech that we could move 40,000 troops to the Persian Gulf "in four weeks," but the Marines have said it would take twice that time. The Soviets moved 50,000 troops, light and heavy armor, and air cover into Afghanistan in a week; but now, 48 hours after a crisis started, the Marines could land only 2200 troops; after two weeks they could land 10,000. The Army can move the 1000 most "ready" members of its 82nd Airborne Division to the Persian Gulf in 48 hours, but if left on the desert, one officer confessed, they'd be destroyed. They are only lightly armed and have no mobility. A worse weakness is supply lines and backdrop: the RDF could eventually deploy 100,000 troops, but these would require another 100,000 reservists to support them. At present, by law, the president can call up only 50,000 reservists.

The only military base for carrying out Carter's threat is the tiny British island of Diego Garcia, which military planners would dearly love to tow about 2000 miles northward and make 100 times larger. Diego Garcia is at least 3000 miles from Kabul, Tehran, and the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Planners say, only half in jest, that staging a major military operation from Diego Garcia would be like landing at Normandy from a base at Cape May, New Jersey. Nonetheless, Diego Garcia is the United States's main hope. In December it was a mere logistics base for planes and ships passing through; now the administration wants $174 million to prepare it as a full-scale base. The complete preparations will cost one billion dollars and take many years.

The only forces in the region are the aircraft carrier groups: the *Kitty Hawk*, from the Pacific Fleet, was already in the Indian Ocean in January. Soon the *Nimitz* group (normally one of two in the Mediterranean) joined it, and later the *Midway* group moved in from the Pacific, for a total of 26 US ships in the region. The carriers have attack and fighter planes, and both conventional and nuclear ordnance. They can strike fast but they have no way to deliver troops to back up their strikes—a job left to the other services. Moreover, there are so few carrier groups stationed around the world that to deploy them in force one place invariably weakens the Navy elsewhere. When both the *Kitty Hawk* and the *Midway* were in the Indian Ocean, their home fleet in the Pacific—whose job is to guard the crucial Asian theater—was at less than 25 percent of its normal strength.

The possibility of US military action in the Persian Gulf illuminates the cobwebbed corner of defense policy that deals with airlift and sealift. The Air Force's Military Airlift Command has 271 C-141s and 77 C-5As to ferry troops and equipment for all the services all over the world. It simply cannot get the RDF to the Persian Gulf quickly. A likely unit to be deployed, for example, is the Army's 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, but even a laudatory article in *Air Force* magazine on the 82nd admitted that "No one is suggesting that the division be airlifted halfway around the world to, say, the Middle East, jump in, and go immediately into action. (That would be an impossibility, given the shortage of transport aircraft. It would take 823 C-141s to airlift the entire division and that's not counting support elements such as Air Force maintenance personnel)." Devoting the C-141s and C-5As to a Persian Gulf contingency would also strip the military of long-range airlift anywhere else in the world.

The administration proposes to remedy airlift problems by starting work on the new CX transport and wants $80 million to begin work on a fleet, eventually costing six billion dollars. But the CX smacks of a quick fix. It would carry half the payload of the C-5A for only half the range. It would need to refuel twice on the way to the Persian Gulf and twice on the way back, yet the Air Force has not mentioned the additional tankers the CX fleet will require as back-up. The CX's specifications are odd: it is designed to parachute drop one of the Army's heaviest vehicles, the Infantry Fighting Vehicle—a delivery method for which the IFV

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The One and One-Half Wars Myth

Throughout the 1970s, the United States has held that in a conflict short of an all-out nuclear war, it would be prepared "to deal simultaneously with one major contingency and one minor contingency," or "one and one-half wars." As expressed in the 1980 Annual Posture Statement, a document widely used in military planning and doubtless read by our enemies: "it seems appropriate to base the size of our general purpose combat forces on the assumption of having to halt simultaneously one major attack (with Europe as the most plausible and demanding locale for its occurrence) and one lesser attack elsewhere."

However, our inability to move rapidly or support US troops in the Persian Gulf shows that we can barely fight the one-half war, let alone one and one-half wars. For instance, airlifting troops rapidly to the Persian Gulf would easily take the entire military airlift fleet, depriving the European theater of any US military airlift. Yet were an attack on Europe to occur at the same time, that airlift would be needed there, too. In preparing for a Persian Gulf contingency, the United States is already talking about moving US troops down from Italy, or the Army's heavy equipment now prepositioned in Germany.

Recent events illustrate how many unanswered questions surround the one and one-half war strategy, even though it is enshrined as doctrine.

Would either side use tactical (small) nuclear weapons in the one-half war, an idea that has been glibly suggested by some officials in discussing US options in the Persian Gulf? Wouldn't the Soviets be sorely tempted to disable our carrier groups—the only US forces in the region—with tactical nuclear weapons before a major push toward the oil fields or the Indian Ocean coast? Would the United States, faced with a Soviet overland push and realizing it could not block it with troops, not feel tempted to use tactical nukes aboard carrier-based aircraft? Many profound words have been uttered on the issue of the use of tactical weapons in a European war—at what point their use unleashes the superpowers to break into full-scale nuclear war, and so on. But very little attention has been paid to the increasingly real possibility of their use elsewhere, and their impact, for instance, on local states that seek (or have) their own nuclear weapons, such as Pakistan or India.

The one-half war traditionally has been viewed as the easy war—an extension of some other conflict against an enemy whose forces are rather weak. But the Mideast-Persian Gulf area is bristling with international, even tribal conflicts, and the Middle East nations are as heavily armed as NATO. NATO fields only nine more divisions than the Middle East countries combined; NATO has only 175 more tanks than the Middle East's total of 15,850. NATO has 2450 military aircraft, fewer than the Middle East's total of 3066. Iraq, a feudal society that still hangs offenders in the public squares, has 3500 tanks, not to mention the T-62, the Soviet main battle tank it has on order. If conflict were to break out in the region, it seems hard to believe that all these weapons would lie around unused, or that a superpower, even with its own sophisticated equipment, would find such a conflict easy or cheap to quell.

A third question involves the allies, who are more dependent than we are on Persian Gulf oil, but who have no military contingency plans, and essentially no military presence there. Generally, they have refrained from establishing a military presence since the British left a decade ago, and have abstained from getting involved in what they characterize as the United States's unique problem in the region based on her ties to Israel. Even after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it is not clear whether Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey will grant the United States overflight rights to reach the region by air in a military emergency. The absence of allied contingency plans and political willingness to fight in that part of the world redoubles back on US planning, leaving the United States alone to fight its one-half war.

A fourth question is whether the Carter administration will draw down US troops, equipment, and weapons now committed to NATO to prepare for a one-half war in the Persian Gulf. Already the possibility has irked the allies; for three years this administration has been trying to build these forces up. If handled skillfully, the issue could prod NATO governments to do more for their own defense, which the administration in the past has urged them to do. On the other hand, it is possible that the allies will see such a drawdown as another reversal of a Carter policy. In short, the question is whether the "one-half war," which people are beginning to take seriously, will be put in competition with the one war, instead of complementing it.

D.S.

was not designed and which would surely wreck it. (Airlift is not an area of exemplary interservice cooperation. IFVs cannot fit even into the C-141 transports; they require a special crane to take their armor off before loading and a special crew at the other end to put the armor back on.)

Although the director of logistics for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Vice Admiral Kent J. Carroll, has admitted it is "questionable" now whether our sealift can ferry the RDF to the Persian Gulf, in general sealift looks like a cheaper way to deploy troops and equipment. The RDF budget request includes money to charter and start building more transport ships. At present, however, depending on whom you believe, the Navy has access to maybe four, maybe 20 "Ro-Ro" ships that can "roll-on, roll-off" heavy equipment at ill-prepared ports. These could be in the Indian Ocean by summer at the earliest, according to Deputy Secretary of Defense W. Graham Claytor Jr. Nonetheless, the sealift items will fare well in Congress. According to one calculation, the entire airlift fleet, including the six billion dollar fleet of CXs, could not move one 100,000-ton Army division in a month, whereas the six billion dollars could buy enough sealift to move six or seven divisions in the same time.

Why is the largest military power in the world now so helpless to act in the Persian Gulf? The problems stem,

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it would seem, from the military's fixation on a few battle scenarios at the expense of other, equally likely ones. Our weak air- and sealift capacity, for example, stems directly from the theory that war would occur in Europe or northeast Asia, where we have troops and equipment prepositioned already. Military planners also assume that such a war would be a protracted one in which America would have many weeks to mobilize, and the front would be supplied, ultimately, by seaborne convoys. Ever heard of a war like that?

But observers both inside and outside the military are increasingly of the opinion that the American army would be next to useless in the Persian Gulf—with the exception of a very few scenarios. Thus leadership of the RDF has shifted quickly to the Marine Corps, to the ire of some Army leaders who felt it should be "theirs."

Caveat Taxpayer! More money and troops do not buy more diverse capabilities. The Army is largely unprepared for anything but a war in Europe, and has not developed in a way that makes it very maneuverable once it arrives at the front. Both the 1973 Middle East war and the Soviet moves in Afghanistan show the usefulness of armored, highly maneuverable units, having relatively independent command and control. But the American Army follows a World War II vintage "firepower attrition" strategy in which so much armor and firepower is amassed that it can outshoot an enemy from a basically fixed position, using centralized command and control.

The presumption that Army equipment can be prepositioned or otherwise brought in by slow convoy has allowed Army equipment to get heavier and heavier. The current main battle tank, the M-60, weighs some 60,000 pounds, whereas the XM-1, the Army's new battle tank, will weigh 130,000 pounds—far too much to be airlifted, incidentally, by the CX. Finally, the XM-1 may not work in the Gulf region: in recent tests it tended to roll in moist, heavy sand.

Some experts reviewing the military options in the Persian Gulf region—or lack of them—argue that the Army should dilute its present strategy with lighter, highly maneuverable armored units that could be deployed in the Middle East and elsewhere. (They note that the French and British tanks outnumbered the German ones in 1940, but that the German forces succeeded because they maneuvered more independently.) The Army, says its critics, is building an unfortunate Maginot Line and the Persian Gulf problem points up its futility. Small wonder, then, that leadership of the RDF is passing to the Marines. A Marine major general, Paul X. Kelley, has been named commander of the RDF, and Secretary Brown has said that the RDF troops will be drawn from "the greater part of the Marine Corps." The Marines have been traditionally the quick deployment force; they are experimenting with maneuver doctrine, and are likely to be the first service to buy light armored vehicles—of the sort possessed in quantity by the Soviet army and many Persian Gulf states.

The inability of the largest military force in the world to conduct emergency operations in the Persian Gulf raises questions not only of strategy, procurement, and organization; it also raises questions of the Carter administration's competence. Our weakness in the Persian Gulf was recognized by the White House as early as 1977, yet basically nothing was done until crises began erupting in the region in late 1979. Finally, when diplomatic reversals made a "strong" stance by the president politically acceptable, Carter announced a new strategic doctrine without the military wherewithal to carry it out. In history, some bluffs go down as great statesmanship. Others, however, get called.

How to defend our interests without breaking the bank.

Solving the Defense Riddle

by Steven L. Canby

It has become fashionable lately to assert that the problem of US and Western defense is one of will and resolve. In the period of American nuclear superiority, "resolve" meant the willingness to brandish nuclear weapons. While this remains largely true in the current posture of NATO forces defending Western Europe, "will" has become virtually synonymous with greater defense spending—suggesting that there is a need for increases in the physical wherewithal for defense. This certainly can be obtained by spending more.

But it also can be accomplished by changes within the structure of the military itself. Throwing good money after bad would be easy if it were not for two realities: inflation and the sheer size of the required increase in

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defense spending. Rethinking the defense structure is more difficult, since it requires changes in ingrained military habits, but it is the only viable, long-range solution. More defense spending will only serve to ease immediate pressures, allow continuation of outmoded practices, and divert attention from a necessary reappraisal of the status quo.

The Carter administration, in attempting to strengthen American military capability around the world, has taken the position that our present forces—in numbers—are sufficient; it is their readiness, deployability, and modernization that must be enhanced. This, of course, symbolizes resolve. But it does not correct the West's longstanding conventional military inferiority. Even so, the Carter proposals, as set forth by Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General David Jones in the 1980 military posture statement, are projected to cost five percent per year for the next five years over the $139.3 billion 1980 defense budget, an overall increase of over 25 percent. In NATO alone, a true military balance would require two to three times the alliance's present divisions. Merely increasing readiness and replacing old weapons with sophisticated new weapons will not rectify the imbalance: if and when the Carter proposals (together with NATO's Long Term Defense Program) become reality, NATO still will be outnumbered by the Soviets in ships and combat aircraft, and almost three to one in tanks, infantry carriers, and artillery.

This reflects an unfortunate truth about US military planning. At a time when defense needs focus on the possible requirement of offsetting military adventurism by the Soviets or their proxies in remote places like Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, or the African subcontinent, US defense planners continue to adhere, however unconsciously, to a style of administrative warfare based on massive firepower, high-technology weaponry, and ponderous back-up supply systems. In this mode of warfare, one that presumes material superiority, important command decisions are reduced to logistical decisions; the enemy is treated as a mere inventory of targets. By its sheer weight and destructive force, this style of war downplays the importance of strategy and the operational aspects of the art of war: deception, surprise, and the ability to outthink and outpace the enemy.

A military subscribing to such precepts will organize itself accordingly. Since the criterion of success is attrition (kill rate over time), it demands high kill rate weapons systems and the material back-up to sustain it. The former requires industry to demonstrate technological prowess by cooking up ever more complex weapons systems; the second leads to a massive support "tail" and a manpower system responsive to slow-paced warfare, but totally inappropriate for high-tempo conflicts which call for internalized command and control, as well as small-unit cohesiveness.

These are the main elements—over-reliance on high technology weapons systems and the need for large support systems to back them up—that have rendered the US military incapable in all but the most protracted battle scenarios. But, most importantly, they have led to excessively high military costs. In the case of NATO, the emphasis on deterrence and nuclear weaponry rather than conventional forces has downplayed more traditional European modes relying on mobilized reserves and military subtlety. The result: according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, in 1978 NATO outspent the Warsaw Pact countries by $20 billion ($180 billion to $160 billion to maintain numerically inferior combat forces when the Soviets were rapidly closing the technology gap.

There is evidence that the situation is in fact worse. Military analysts now believe an additional 10 to 15 percent increase in the defense budget is necessary just to keep NATO on the footing it is publicly thought to have already. NATO expenditures were kept down by such expedients as skimping on training, maintenance, spare parts, and ammunition stocks. The Air Force and Navy have cut back training flying hours and regularly cannibalize their new aircraft to support the remaining fleet. In addition, the CIA estimate of $160 billion overstates Soviet defense expenditures by at least 10 percent. In 1978, therefore, it would have cost the West roughly $200 billion to field the forces it thought it had, while the real cost of observed Eastern forces was probably as low as $130 billion.

NATO's inability to get full value for its resources has led to repeated US initiatives over the last 20 years to cut the fat in the system, Adam Smith-style. Though these programs have been hailed as virtual panaceas by successive NATO defense ministers—especially the latest effort at "rationalization," "standardization," and "interoperability"—actual savings have been almost nonexistent. Standardization, for example, should create in theory savings of 10 to 20 percent on limited-production weapons systems, but major equipment systems appropriate for economy-of-scale standardization make up only 14 percent of NATO country budgets. In an ideal world, this would lead to a potential actual savings of two to three percent. Unfortunately, in the real world of co-production and licensing (to insure home country employment, future capabilities, etc.) even these small savings have a way of evaporating.

But the real problem with this businessman's approach to military budget management is that it ignores military realities. Proponents of standardization argue that higher costs are clearly justified by the benefits of greater interoperability—the use of common doctrines and tactics. While this may appear to be intuitively appealing, it has the effect of reducing national styles of warfare to the lowest common denominator. The British, for instance, do not think like Germans; they could duplicate the German

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operational style only with difficulty. Even if this could be accomplished, it would mean re-equipping the British army with German-style tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. On the other hand, by slowing down the tempo of their operations, the Germans could emulate the British by supplying them with British tanks—which are more like heavy tank destroyers than true tanks. In doing so, NATO would manage to reduce the effectiveness of its 12 best divisions. Similarly, standardized tactics are inappropriate for modern tactical airpower. Modern aircraft and anti-aircraft systems depend upon electronics for their fire control as well as for countering that of the enemy. In the environment of electronic warfare, where the enemy may at any time develop effective countermeasures, diversity is obviously an advantage.

It is about time the US faced up to the proposition that something is fundamentally wrong with the way Western defense is structured. The US's attrition-by-firepower style of warfare and the consequent emphasis on high-technology solutions have led military planners to several major mistakes of logic:

—Technological superiority has not proven to have effectively offset numerical inferiority in combat troops. Greater technological complexity has yielded diminishing returns both in terms of expense and relative combat capability. As equipment becomes more complex, the supporting "tail" becomes larger and training is cut short in order to protect the equipment.

—The US predilection for a questionable "target servicing" approach to warfare has resulted in hardware—sensors, computers, and electronic "force multipliers"—which barely work, even in the most benign circumstances. A related fascination with gadgetry leads to a "gold-plating" of weapons, which often downgrades their combat effectiveness.

—Equipment is now designed and bought on the basis of 20-year life-cycle costs though it is generally accepted that future wars will increase the rate of equipment loss. Peacetime cost-minimizing strategies have ignored the realities of combat and could well result in wartime weapons shortages.

—The tendency to design and justify equipment

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Based on early returns, our CBS/New York Times poll has projected an early Custer victory here in Montana. Details at eleven..

drawing by Mike Peters

(fighter aircraft and tanks in particular) in terms of one-on-one combat ignores the fact that combat is more often a confused mêlée. In this context, the advantages of technological sophistication tend to wash out, and numbers and tactics assume considerable importance.

—The real pay-off of advanced military technology has been constrained by its application to present tactics and organizational concepts. Technology now effectively shores up only dated concepts. The big pay-off will come in allowing technology to release organizational and tactical constraints and to permit new modes of force deployment.

—Finally, the attention focused on technology has obscured the most pressing area of defense organization reform: manpower alone accounts for half the defense budget and is crucial to the development of effective conventional forces. Today's all-volunteer forces, particularly the air and naval components, use highly sophisticated equipment, difficult to operate and maintain and not readily replaceable if lost. These forces require technicians and other highly trained personnel. High labor turnover in such a force is not desirable. Our volunteer system, geared for "youth and vigor" (and to outmoded requirements of ground combat), no longer makes sense today.

By changing the military pay structure and converting to an older, more stable force, the armed services could save more than $15 billion annually, much of it from the phased-in consolidation and reduction of training schools and bases. Immeasurable gains could be made in troop productivity and effectiveness. A stablized fighting force could generate several sorely needed benefits: highly proficient combat units; major realignments within services and individual units which could lead to major savings in support services; and greater small unit cohesiveness essential to high morale both in and out of combat. This last, of course, hardly describes the condition of our troops in Europe.

In NATO, the West could reach military superiority at the rough equivalent of present costs. The critical deficiency of NATO always has been the lack of combat units and operational reserves. The problem has been one of organization, not lack of total numbers. NATO Europe has sufficient manpower and even a sufficient number of militarily trained reservists, but it has never placed these reservists into organized units nor bought the necessary material to equip them. Since reservists are already trained and do not receive military pay, total costs for *tripling* NATO's available European divisions would amount to a 30 percent increase in allied army budgets, or 15 percent in overall defense budgets. Because of the magnitude of the increase in troops, the expense of maintaining US-based seaborne support convoys for the first 60 to 90 days of a conflict would become unnecessary. By folding the existing reserve system into the new system and fractionally reducing European air forces and substituting instead US air assets (which now cannot be deployed to Europe because of overcrowding of forward airfields), ad-

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ditional costs of the troop increase could be fully offset. Moreover, with sea lane protection now viewed mainly as a hedge against an unexpectedly long war, and with increased troop strength in Europe, the geographical restrictions on access to the open seas and other limitaitons working against the Soviet navy could be fully exploited, permitting the release of Western naval assets for use elsewhere.

These changes would certainly generate parity and military balance. In many ways they simply mirror Soviet practices. Superiority could be gained by utilizing the unique military potential of the West German forces. These formations are agile and designed to seek and exploit changing circumstances. Once on the flank or in the rear of the more ponderous Soviet formations, it would be difficult for the Soviet high command to maintain control. Judging by Soviet military literature, the Russians are keenly aware of this possibility.

In third world areas where US forces might be deployed, potential US deployments are currently oversized and overweighted. They suffer from three general phenomena. First, the US lacks a true light infantry. What purports to be light, in fact, is not light at all; the result is a strategic ponderousness and a tactical immobility that creates its own problems by giving opponents time to organize resistance. Second, the US has become mesmerized by the tank and anti-tank threat. Except for Europe and the Mediterranean littoral, most of the world is forest, jungle, marsh, mountain, or open expanse desert inherently unsuitable for armor. The shortage in the American military structure is not armor but light or "mountain" infantry.

Mountain infantry assumes a fluid maneuver style of warfare which defeats the enemy by collapsing its ability to fight. Where forces are dense relative to space, as in much of the Middle East, heavy armor is very much the requirement. But when armor becomes lost in desert expanses, or must travel in strung-out columns because of desert, forest, or mountain conditions, heavy armor becomes vulnerable. Armor is vulnerable to attack helicopters and heli-borne infantry, and also to light infantry using forests and mountains to mask its movements and to compartmentalize its opponents. Third, the US force structure and its replicas in US client states is everywhere typified by the contrast between our own Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) and the Soviet expeditionary force in Afghanistan. The US RDF of 110,000 is to be an infantry corps of three divisions. The Soviet invasion force of 85,000 was a mechanized army of six divisions. It used to be argued that Soviet divisions were smaller and therefore less capable. Soviet divisions are still smaller, but it is now recognized that these divisions are as strong or stronger than our own in terms of firepower and combat equipment.

On the sea, our problem is highlighted by the fact that Western navies have twice the tonnage of the Eastern navies but a fifth fewer ships. The US Navy is particularly weak in mine warfare and lacks the small craft needed to protect its larger ships when stand-off distances cannot be maintained, as in the confined anchorages of the Mediterranean at the start of a conflict, or if the fleet must move close to shore to support amphibious assaults. (In reality the Navy has no intention of entering the confined seas surrounding the USSR and its air attacks in any case would not add a significant capability *vis à vis* the USSR.)

The truth is that the Navy has been designed to fight its own shadow. The Soviets have only dispersed naval squadrons which have not been designed for war at sea. Naval aviation has come full circle. During its early years, the emphasis was on cheap planes against expensive ships, since ships were then able to support a multitude of tasks, such as amphibious back-up. But the Navy now has expensive planes to protect an expensive fleet built to support only the planes, while many of the Navy's projective functions have atrophied. The Navy has fallen into the trap of being a system operating within itself and for itself, with little regard for external utility. Until the Navy breaks out of this trap, its usefulness as an instrument for applying force (as opposed to *symbolizing* force) will be limited. This is not an argument against a strong Navy, but for focusing its strength.

In the air US tactical air forces have developed a mode of operations highly dependent upon electronics, making US air forces from the perspective of our European allies unduly expensive and operationally susceptible to "spoofing" and to other countermeasures. This approach may be satisfactory for air defense, deep strike, and for maritime attack. It is inappropriate for its single largest mission: ground support. Numbers are lacking for inflicting significant damage on enemy forces or targets; weapons delivery is difficult for high-speed aircraft, and the aircraft themselves have become highly vulnerable to ground air defense. Accordingly the ground support mission requires a different approach than that now in vogue: a regression to simpler and smaller cross-section aircraft mounting high velocity cannons and capable of being procured and operated in large numbers and from simpler and less vulnerable airfields and carrier platforms.

Politically, the reforms of military structure outlined here would remove the possibility of European "Finlandization"; militarily, they would permit the release of US forces for use elsewhere; and strategically, they would restrict Soviet transgressions by instilling a fear of leaving the key European sector vulnerable. Even if SALT II were not stalled indefinitely and the spirit of detente rapidly fading, the time has come to shore up our sagging military capabilities and to propose *sound* solutions for our allies. Simply throwing money at the problem won't accomplish anything.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Changing the World

There's an idea in *Knife in the Head*. It began with that idea, obviously, but that's also where it ends: we can see that it had an idea, and we can see that the film doesn't realize it. The script is muddled and unfocused, but what it deals with is so visible, so tantalizingly out of reach, that I felt myself pulling for it to straighten out. No luck.

Possibly the idea was vaguely suggested by the case of Rudi Dutschke, the German student who was shot in the head during a political protest in the late 1960s and who recovered. (And who recently died.) The protagonist here—played by Bruno Ganz, lately seen in *The Left-Handed Woman*—is not political, but he's shot in the head by a policeman in a political mess; recovers; and is politically altered. Purportedly.

Ganz is a scientist in a German city, married to a woman who *is* political and who is amorously involved with a man in her group. Feeling none too merry, even disconsolately homicidal, Ganz goes one evening to pick her up at a meeting, finds police there, and breaks into the building to find her. The place is empty, but as he turns, he sees a policeman pointing a pistol at him. Freeze. Next we see him on an operating table with a bullet in his head.

The plot question is: Was he framed? Was he shot in cold blood? Or did he, as the police contend, pull a knife and go after the cop? Then what happened to that knife? Does it exist? Or is it "hidden" in his head, as someone says later?

The thematic question is: Can one not be political? Haven't the forces of circumstance, of society, made clear that abstinence is impossible, that, though radical politics in Europe may not be motivated by stark hunger as it is in so much of the world, it's nonetheless imperative out of spiritual revulsion and despair?

The answer to this large question, supposedly blasted into Ganz with that pistol shot, is assumed, not dramatized. Peter Schneider's screenplay makes three considerable errors. First, it dwells far too long on the clinical details of physical recovery. (Ganz is partially paralyzed at first and has to fight his way back.) For long stretches, the film almost becomes a chronicle of therapy. Second, not the slightest attempt is made to make clear the beliefs of the radicals—not even a glib slogan or two. Even in Germany this might have been taking things a bit too much for granted, and it's certainly so here, particularly since our sympathy with them is also taken for granted—as is our sympathy with their terrorist acts, if they commit any. Third, Ganz's change from neutrality to commitment is never shown: political action goes on around him, cops vs. radicals, that's all.

And at the end Schneider completely abandons the motion of the story, hazy though it is, for a moralist/symbolist abstraction. Ganz goes to the home of the policeman who shot him, and the two of them perform a little charade of reversal. We are supposed to believe: a) that the cop would let him in; b) that he would play the Ganz role in reenactment of the shooting; c) that he would leave his pistol hanging where Ganz could see it and seize it. The film ends with a reversed return to the beginning: Ganz pointing a pistol at the cop's head. Quite apart from the fact that the film drops realism for arty Teutonic film *Quatsch*, it quite forsakes its theme for a plotty question-mark ending. (Did or didn't Ganz shoot?) Only close friends of the screenwriter and director can think the conclusion crystallizes a new political position for Ganz. To the rest of us, it must seem a superficial gimmick.

Fundamentally the picture's failure is irritating, less for the matters detailed above, stringent as they are, than for its reliance on our complicity, immediate and unquestioning. Flag waving used to be one kind of hopefully automatic response-puller; it's been replaced these days by anti flag waving. The new assumption is no more endearing than the old.

But what keeps us watching, despite the script's muzziness, is Reinhard Hauff's direction. This is Hauff's fifth theatrical feature and the first that I've seen. He was born in 1939 so it almost goes without saying that, like so many coeval Germans, he cut his cultural teeth on American pop. He began in TV, with documentaries on Janis Joplin and Wilson Pickett. Clearly he doesn't ask enough questions of the script for *Knife*, but clearly he has film sense as such. His style is taciturn and selective, with just enough in each composition, in each sequence, to accomplish the job in hand. He works in figurative blocks: many sequences end in quick fades to black. This technique is often jarring in films where it's used sporadically or without plan; but Hauff quickly establishes that he intends the effect of *construction*,

Films Worth Seeing

Best Boy. Don't be put off by this documentary's subject—a middle-aged man mentally retarded since birth. Ira Wohl has made this picture about his cousin—and his wonderful aunt—with reticence and love.

Coal Miner's Daughter. Sissy Spacek agreeably homespun as Loretta Lynn—and Spacek sings the songs herself, pleasantly. The first half is a graphic drama of family life in Appalachian poverty; the second half is trite martyrdom by success.

The Left-Handed Woman. Peter Handke joins the select company of fine writers who are fine directors. He wrote the screenplay before he wrote the novel, and with the ideal casting of Edith Clever in the title role, he has made it into a "moment" of exquisite, charged silence.

Soupçon. Fun through pleasant fib-bing, from the man who made *Cousin, Cousine* and is getting better at the job.

SK

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building with one "slab" after another. Ironically this method in itself, full of implication, only increases our disappointment at the end.

Angela Winkler, just seen as Oskar's mother in *The Tin Drum*, manages to be both harried and bland as the wife. Ganz carries his little treasury of suggestive moroseness into this film but with a difference. Partly because a lot of the time in the hospital he *has* to look awful but partly out of actor's choice, Ganz attempts to use ugliness as an aesthetic here, as a kind of bravado, an equivalent to attraction. It might work if the role were more organic, but he's left stranded . . . and ugly.

Politics directly, in the next film. No implications: right at you. *The Battle of Chile*, reviewed here January 21, 1978, was a two-part documentary made heroically by a Chilean named Patricio Guzman and his colleagues during the last 10 months of the Allende regime, which they supported but feared for. I noted in my review that Guzman had gone to Cuba to edit some more footage into a sequel.

Now it's here, at the invaluable Film Forum in New York. It's called *Power of the People*, and it's not really a sequel, it's a concomitant of the first two parts, covering the same 10 months. But in this 95-minute final section of the three-part work, Guzman and friends concentrated on the reaction of Santiago workers to the combined efforts of the Chilean bourgeoisie and American interests to overthrow Allende: how the workers beat a transport strike that was supposed to topple the government, how they organized distribution, and more.

As a document, it's important and unique. As film, it's tedious, just a lot of hortatory heads and carefully selected interviewees. As politics, it's a rerun of communist rituals and jargon, although the word communism is never mentioned. ("Socialism" is, as usual, the euphemism used.) Still it's discomfiting to say anything against this film because it's not studio agitprop, it's a record, and I hope I never find out how many of the people we see were slaughtered after Allende fell. (Some untranslated final titles tell us, apparently, that the Chilean workers fight on.)

I don't want to balance murdered people and oppressed survivors "on the one hand" against whatever I could put on the other hand. I'll just cite one of Robert Lowell's last published comments that stays with me (in *Salmagundi*, Spring 1977). "Politics? We live in the sunset of Capitalism. We have thundered nobly against its bad record all our years, yet we cling to its vestiges, not out of greed and nostalgia but for our intelligible survival." Who doesn't know about the horrors in our world? Who doesn't know that the knowledge of them doesn't license us smugly to let them continue? Perhaps, as Guzman's film implies, after that Capitalist sun has set, all will be better in a new dawn. But we can't *see* ourselves in it; and without that vision, the risks—not merely personal—are very high. After all the wrongness of now is proved and all the rightness of that future is explicated, our survival in it is not intelligible.

John Canaday on art

Luminism and Modern Taste

The big exhibition of landscape painting at the National Gallery of Art in Washington called "American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850-1875" is making a lot of people happy. Crowds stream into it expectantly, begin smiling right away, and exit delighted with the show and with themselves. The American public, always eager for self-improvement, has been remarkably docile during the last 30 years of bullying by critics and curators of modern art who have dictated to them what they should like, always with the implication that anything they liked spontaneously was bound to be bad. Now comes a show of pictures people can love, pictures that, while not modern in date, are presented in terms of critical rediscovery—the latest thing. Who wouldn't be happy? And as a final joy, "American Light," being 100 percent American, is cause for national pride, all the more welcome today when patriotism is in short supply.

Nobody is happier about the success of the show, which has been critical as well as popular, than the group of still-young historians of American art headed by John Wilmerding, Barbara Novak, and Theodore Stebbins, who have been battling away for years against fashionable currents that left 19th-century American painting in a backwater. The only glum faces among these resurrectionists may be at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, which, for the first time in its solid but not very exploratory career, finds itself in the position of neglected prophet. Twenty-five years ago at the Whitney, John I. H. Baur coined the term "luminism," but his voice was lost in the hubbub over abstract expressionism.

Mr. Baur described luminism as a "polished and meticulous realism" in which atmospheric effects, rather than being created by impressionistic disintegration of form under the impact of all-permeating light, were translated into "careful gradations of tone . . . and precise rendering of variations in texture and color." Whether or not "luminism" is the best possible term as an identification for these paintings (it suggests a scientific interest in light rather than the romantic response to landscape that is their primary characteristic), it is at least a tag as a point of departure in analyzing these American scenes where boulders and pebbles, skies and lakes, hills and beaches, marshes and mountains, boats and ships, and now and then small human figures, are represented in acute detail and with supernatural clarity as manifestations of the sublime.

There have been other admirable exhibitions in the same general area of American landscape painting (this one pretty well covers the entire 19th century in spite of the "1850-1875" of the title), but they have been fragmentary by comparison. Also, the best of them have been organized or funded under circumstances limiting the exhibitor to American art, a limitation—let's face it—that carries with it an unhappy taint of *faute de mieux*—the *mieux* meaning European. The embarrassing truth is that this same exhibition, if held at the Whitney in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Mr. Baur's precocious perception, would have been just as good but would not have been taken half as seriously. At the National Gallery it is a bang-up event, a major exhibition in a museum where the standard of selection is excellence alone without concessions to century or place.

John Canaday is former art critic of the *New York Times*.

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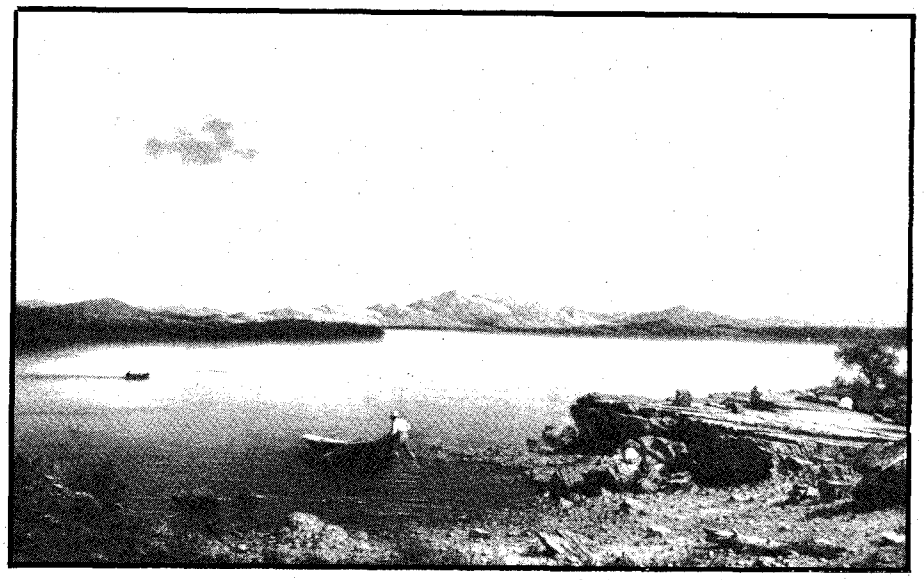


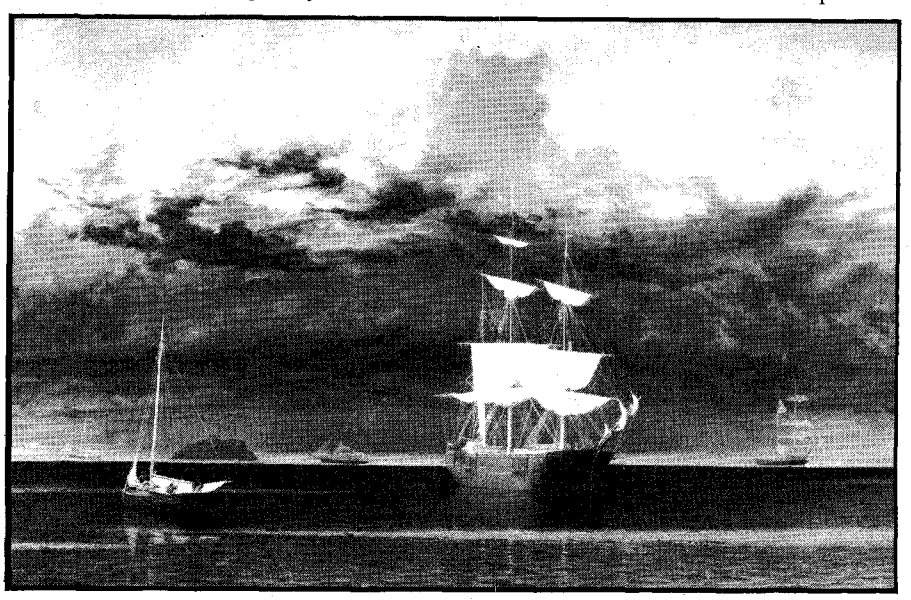
"Lake George" (1862) by Martin Johnson Heade

For the first time, artists such as Martin Johnson Heade, John Frederick Kensett, and Fitz Hugh Lane are presented not as minor masters but as painters of the first rank, while painters of obscure position rise to fill the minor-master gap. "American Light" is still emphatically an American exhibition, but only in the way that an exhibition of quattrocento Florentine art would be emphatically Italian. "American" no longer means "runner-up." Critics, historians, and curators are at last beginning to realize that "indigenous" and "provincial" are not synonymous terms, and that the European standards we have been applying in the evaluation of American art are unjust measurements—not because the standards were too high for provincial artists to meet, but because they have little to do with expression of an American spirit. The 19th was a century of such brilliance in France that it has blinded us in the 20th to virtues not derived from its masters; there has even been a feeling that 19th-century American painters, who more often followed the Germans than the French, picked the losers in a kind of aesthetic Olympics when they should have been catching up with Delacroix and the Impressionists.

Catching up with Europe became the name of the game in American art when the Armory Show of 1913 divided our critics and artists into pro- and anti-modern art camps. It didn't take long after the hiatus of World War I for the American disciples of fauvism, cubism, and expressionism to establish themselves as the American avant-garde of movements already beginning to show signs of middle age in Paris. In the 1930s, Americans like Marsden Hartley, Arthur G. Dove, and Stuart Davis became well established as our leading Europeanizers, even when they hybridized European stylistic devices with American subject matter, and in the 1940s these pioneers-once-removed received full canonization as the saviors of American art.

The rest of that story is the postwar triumph of abstract expressionism, called an American triumph because it happened in New York, but fathered by European refugees and seized upon by painters with American birth certificates but thoroughly European loyalties. American museums, led by the always Europe-oriented Museum of Modern Art, joined in the intellectual jingoism that declared abstract expressionism an American innovation rather than what it was, a successfully transplanted mature European movement. Those were boom years for art in New York, from the late 1940s to 1960, but there was nothing very American about the New York School except its infusion of new enthusiasm into a movement that was growing stale, and a masterly demonstration of the typically American marketing processes by which a demand was created for a kind of art that had very little to offer as a consumer product.

The major psychological factor in the success of this marketing program—a cooperative venture among adventurous dealers, messianic critics, and evangelistic museums—was our American adulation of a winner. In the art world, the triumph of New York over Paris as the undisputed international art center carried with it all the thrill of this year's hockey victory over the Soviet team. We lost sight of the plain fact that the real victory belonged to the bankers. With New York as the world's financial center, painting sold better there than anywhere else, but the illusion of an independent aesthetic victory by home-grown champions was so strong that no truly American painting in contradiction to the illusion could compete, as Mr. Baur learned. How could efforts to revalidate the kind of 19th-century landscapes that now look so beautiful in Washington—tightly painted, exquisitely detailed, realistically observed no matter how imaginatively transformed—how could paintings like these compete with the brass-band promotion being given to the free-wheeling, impetuous, hyperthyroid theatricalism of the New York School? Luminism was an art of contemplation; abstract expressionism, an art of excitement. And it was during those years that "exciting" became the primary laudatory adjective of aesthetic description at the Museum of Modern Art in its periodic



"Ships and an Approaching Storm Off Owl's Head, Maine" (1860) by Fitz Hugh Lane

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group shows of young American artists nominated for fame, or at least the attention of collectors.

In spite of this unfavorable climate, our persistent yearning to identify a truly indigenous American art was finding partial satisfaction in a re-examination of American primitives as something more than conventional folk art, which has associations with peasantry or at least with simpler folk than this American so-called folk art served. European art, folk or otherwise, offers no close parallel to these portraits, landscapes, still lifes, and moral allegories painted for a provincial gentry who could not afford, or did not have access to, more sophisticated sources. Under what I regard as a misnomer, "American Folk Painters of Three Centuries," the Whitney has an exhibition (until May 13) that, by coincidence, allows comparison with "American Light." By a further coincidence the Whitney is showing concurrently (until May 25) a Marsden Hartley retrospective, an unintentional pairing of truly indigenous art (preponderantly 19th-century) with one 20-century American's effort to Americanize what he learned from the European avant-garde.

In the case of Marsden Hartley I have to confess to an apparently irremediable aversion to his paintings, which I have tried for 30 years to like. Hartley has always seemed to me to be only heavy-handed when he tries to be vigorous, most artificial when he tries hardest to dig down to basic truths in his adaptations of German expressionist mannerisms, and truly appalling in any aspect of figure painting. In short, amateurish. This is a blind spot on my part, but it still seems to me that even observers not similarly afflicted must be impressed, upon seeing the two Whitney shows after having seen "American Light," by the contrast between the fatigued look of Hartley's modernism and the remarkable freshness of the primitives. There is a direct kinship between the work of these artists and their frequently contemporary luminist compatriots, a shared fascination with precise detail of the kind that the British critic Lawrence Alloway once spotted as part of a typically American predilection for "specificity of reference." Add to this tradition and the waning of abstraction the current revival of acutely detailed realism in such painters as Richard Estes (even though the hard, flat light of his cityscapes is inimical to the gentle

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modulations of luminism), and it becomes apparent why the National Gallery's exhibition is an innovative success in 1980 whereas it would have been regarded as *retardataire* by critics in 1950.

It already has become a cliché to say that "American Light" makes it necessary to rewrite the history of American art. This may be an exaggeration, but considering our taste for extremes, by which each new trend in art must dismiss the preceding one as a horrible mistake, we can expect any day now to find a young critic making a splash with a thesis that the Armory Show set back the course of American painting by 50 years.

In the meantime, the three exhibitions mentioned here have produced three excellent books doubling as catalogues, and a fourth that amplifies the points made in the first. They are:

First, and imperatively, *American Light: the Luminist Movement, 1850-1875*, the exhibition's catalogue, published by the National Gallery of Art, $19.95, with essays by John Wilmerding, who organized the show, and—sharing top honors all—Barbara Novak, Lisa Fellows Andrus, Earl A. Powell, David C. Huntington, Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., Linda S. Ferber, Weston Naef, and Albert Gelpi. The illustrations are copious—going beyond the pictures included in the exhibition itself; the history of the movement is scholarly; the ideas of the individual contributors are perceptive, and the whole book adds up to a record of enthusiastic discovery.

American Folk Painters of Three Centuries, a fine book-cum-catalogue, edited by Jean Lipman, the redoubtable scholar of American folk art, and Tom Armstrong, Director of the Whitney (Hudson Hills Press, $35), is an entrancing production, remarkable for the clarity and veracity of the color plates illustrating biographical/critical articles on individual painters by a roster of the most respected names in the field. If there is a better book or a handsomer one on the subject, I haven't seen it.

Marsden Hartley, by Barbara Haskell (Whitney Museum of American Art in association with New York University Press, cloth $35, paper $15), must be the once-and-for-all book on the subject. With its exhaustive research and its (of course) sympathetic yet nonpartisan approach, it is a rebuke to the reactions I have confessed—but not a corrective. It is a very well-made book and should be in the library of anyone interested in 20th-century art in America, no matter what stance you take.

Finally, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875* by Barbara Novak (Oxford University Press, $35) is a work of scholarship enlivened—as the best scholarship always is—by a relay to the reader of the author's fascination with her subject. What she is concerned with is the philosophical attitudes toward nature affected by both the romantic discovery of the American countryside and wilderness, and new attitudes toward nature as modified by science, particularly geology. American landscape painting reflects a cultural ground most familiar to us through writers. As an art historian Novak is as interested in what the painters tell us about the culture that produced them as she is in the culture, including its writers, that helped determine how painters saw nature. After 100 years and more, the relationship between writers and painters seems an interplay; at the time, one feels on reading this book, it was not an exchange but a fusion. *Nature and Culture* was written over a period of several years preceding the Washington exhibition and deals with a wider field of which luminism is a salient aspect. (Novak's contribution to the "American Light" catalogue is called "On Defining Luminism.") *Nature and Culture* is an impressive performance, perhaps even more impressive for the fact that the earliest of the essays in it goes back to 1970, which establishes Miss Novak as a kind of pioneer as well as a member of the new critical avant-garde.

Against the semicolon; for the period.

The Philosophy of Punctuation

by Paul Robinson

Punctuation absorbs more of my thought than seems healthy for a man who pretends to be well adjusted. The subject is naturally attractive for all with character structures of the sort Freud dubbed anal, and I readily confess to belonging to that sect. We anal folk keep neat houses, are always on time, and know all the do's and don'ts, including those of punctuation. Good punctuation, we feel, makes for clean thought. A mania for punctuation is also an occupational hazard for almost any teacher, as hundreds of our hours are given over to correcting the vagrant punctuation of our students.

One approach to punctuation is by way of rules. In my very favorite book, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White, we may read, for example, Rule Number 2: "In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last." I couldn't agree more heartily, and I love the quaint formulation. Better than that, I have inserted the missing comma in countless sentences written by students and colleagues of mine. I have also suffered no little distress seeing that comma removed from my own prose after it has been sent to the *New York Times Book Review* or (yes, I'm sorry to say) *The New Republic*, both of which clearly have adopted policies of eliminating this serial comma so beloved by purists. [Editors' note: as of June 25, 1979, *TNR* restored the serial comma.]

Rules are important, no question about it. But by themselves they are insufficient. Unless one has an emotional investment, rules are too easily fogotten. What we must instill, I'm convinced, is an attitude toward punctuation, a set of feelings about both the process in general and the individual marks of punctuation. That set of feelings might be called a philosophy of punctuation.

I say "a" philosophy, because I'm not yet so opinionated as to insist that everyone adopt my own. I recognize legitimate alternatives, and I'm quite aware that punctuation has a history. A single page of Thomas Carlyle, or any 19th-century writer, reminds us, for instance, that a comma between subject and verb—for me the most offensive of all punctuation errors—was once perfectly acceptable. A colleague of mine, whom I consider a fine writer, punctuates, as it were, by ear. That is, he seeks to reduplicate patterns of speech, to indicate through his punctuation how a sentence is supposed to sound. Consequently his punctuation lacks strict consistency. But I can respect it as

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guided at all times by what I consider philosophical principles.

Given my character, my own philosophy is more legalistic. My colleague, you might say, is a Platonist in punctuation, while I am an Aristotelian. My punctuation is informed by two ideals: clarity and simplicity. Punctuation has the primary responsibility of contributing to the plainness of one's meaning. It has the secondary responsibility of being as invisible as possible, of not calling attention to itself. With these principles in mind, and on the basis of reading what now passes for acceptable writing, I have developed a set of emotional responses to individual marks of punctuation. Precisely such emotional responses, I believe, are what most writers lack, and their indifference accounts for their errors.

Let me now introduce my dramatis personae. First come the period and the comma. These are the only lovely marks of punctuation, and of the two the period is the lovelier, because more compact and innocent of ambiguity. I have fantasies of writing an essay punctuated solely with periods and commas. I seldom see a piece of prose that shouldn't, I feel, have more periods and fewer of those obtrusive marks that seem to have usurped its natural place. The comma, as noted, was once overused, but it now suffers from relative neglect. The missing comma before the "and" introducing the last item in a series is merely the most obvious example.

Periods and commas are lovely because they are simple. They force the writer to express his ideas directly, to eliminate unnecessary hedges, to forgo smart-aleck asides. They also contribute to the logical solidity of a piece of writing, since they make us put all our thoughts into words. By way of contrast, a colon can be used to smooth over a rough logical connection. It has a verbal content ranging anywhere from "namely" to "thus," and it can function to let the writer off the hook. Periods and commas, because of their very neutrality, make one an honest logician.

Semicolons are pretentious and overactive. These days one seems to come across them in every other sentence. "These days" is alarmist, since half a century ago the German poet Christian Morgenstern wrote a brilliant parody, "Im Reich der Interpunktionen," in which imperialistic semicolons are put to rout by an "antisemikolonbund" of periods and commas. Nonetheless, if the undergraduate essays I see are repre-

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sentative, we are in the midst of an epidemic of semicolons. I suspect that the semicolon is so popular because it is the first fancy punctuation mark students learn of, and they assume that its frequent appearance will lend their writing a properly scholarly cast. Alas, they are only too right. But I doubt that they use semicolons in their letters. At least I hope they don't.

More than half of the semicolons one sees, I would estimate, should be periods, and probably another quarter should be commas. Far too often, semicolons, like colons, are used to gloss over an imprecise thought. They place two clauses in some kind of relation to one another, but relieve the writer of saying exactly what that relation is. Even the simple conjunction "and," for which they are often a substitute, has more content, since it suggests compatability or logical continuity. ("And," incidentally, is among the most abused words in the language. It is forever being exploited as a kind of neutral vocalization connecting two things that have no connection whatever.)

In exasperation I have tried to confine my own use of the semicolon to demarking sequences that contain internal commas and therefore might otherwise be confusing. I recognize that my reaction is extreme. But the semicolon has become so hateful to me that I feel almost morally compromised when I use it.

Before leaving the realm of epidemics, I want to mention two other practices that are out of hand: the use of italics for emphasis and of quotation marks for distancing. These are ugly habits because of the intellectual tone they set. Italics rarely fail to insult the reader's intelligence. More often than not they tell us to emphasize a word or phrase that we would emphasize automatically in any natural reading of the sentence. Quotation marks create the spurious impression of an aristocracy of sensibility. Three paragraphs back I originally put quotation marks around "fancy," to suggest—quite falsely—that I would never use such a word myself, being of too refined a temperament.

At the opposite pole are two marks of punctuation that have grown increasingly obsolescent, the question mark and the exclamation point. Appropriately, the disappearance of the question mark largely reflects the disappearance of questions, which sound unpleasantly rhetorical to us. But even real questions, if they are long enough, are now apt to end in periods. The exclamation point is obviously too emphatic, too childish for our sophisticated ways. Psychologically speaking, the decline of these two marks is the inverse of the semicolon epidemic. Questions and exclamations betray a sense of inquisitiveness and wonder that is distinctly unmodern, whereas semicolons imply a capacity for complex, dialectical formulations appropriate to our complex times. As part of my campaign against the semicolon—no doubt irrationally—I am endeavoring to develop friendlier relations with these neglected gestures. But I'll admit that it's not easy.

Then there are parentheses and dashes. They are of course indispensable. I've used them five times already in this essay alone. But I think one must maintain a very strict attitude toward them. I start from the proposition that all parentheses and dashes are syntactical defeats. They signify an inability to express one's ideas sequentially, which, unless you're James Joyce, is the way the language was meant to be used. Reality may be simultaneous, but expository prose is linear. Parentheses and dashes represent efforts to elude the responsibilities of linearity. They generally betoken stylistic laziness, an unwillingness to spend the time figuring out how to put things in the most logical order. Needless to say, they also betoken a failure of discipline. Every random thought, every tenuous analogy gets dragged in. Good writing is as much a matter of subtraction as creation, and parentheses are the great enemy of subtraction. In all that I write I try to find ways to eliminate them.

A monstrous variation on the parenthesis is the content footnote. What, after all, is a content footnote but material that one is either too lazy to integrate into the text or too reverent to discard? Reading a piece of prose that constantly dissolves into extended footnotes is profoundly disheartening. I picture a mind in tatters. Hence my rule of thumb for footnotes is exactly the same as that for parentheses. One should regard them as symbols of failure. I hardly need add that in this vale of tears failure is sometimes unavoidable.

Only one issue of punctuation generates no emotion in me, namely the rules governing the placement of punctuation marks with respect to quotation marks. Those rules are simple enough, but perhaps because they differ between England and the United States they possess for me only the arbitrary authority of commandments, and none of the well-nigh metaphysical significance that I associate with the period, the comma, the parenthesis, and the semicolon.

Orwell: The Transformation
by Peter Stansky and William Abrahams

(Knopf; $12.95)

George Orwell—is there another writer today except V. S. Naipaul who has his fiery touch?—was always concerned with "society." He was careful to be impersonal even when he wrote directly out of his experiences as a policeman in Burma, as the lowest kind of kitchen worker "down and out in Paris and London," and as a militiaman in Barcelona observing the Communists' suppression of their opponents on the left. I remember how his diary during the "phony" war period startled me: nothing but news bulletins and his exasperated reactions. So why does he still invite so much interest in himself 30 years after his death? Why during his lifetime was it natural for his many enemies on the English left to be so personal about him? C. P. Snow, reacting angrily to the total bleakness of *1984*, charged that Orwell was even positively against the "future."

Orwell as a socialist—Stansky and Abrahams show how suprisingly late Orwell became one—was a vehement Swiftian critic of British imperialist hardness and indifference. He was just as unsparing of the self-approval and antidemocratic tendencies in that loose religious grouping known as British socialism. Hazlitt, whom Orwell resembles in his downright style and his fecund social curiosity, was disliked because he idolized the French Revolution and exposed his emotional self in

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drawing of George Orwell by David Schorr

Liber Amoris. Orwell was disliked because from no set position but "democratic socialism" as a party of one, he criticized reactionaries and Moscow-traveling "progressives" with the same contempt. He was so hard and sharp in attack that it was not just his victims who wondered if there were not more than political differences to explain so much hatred.

Then there was what Stansky and Abrahams, following up *The Unknown Orwell* with this second and final volume of their biographical study, call the "transformation." Eric Blair, born in 1903 in Bengal, son of a British official in the Indian Civil Service, "right family" and all that, educated at Eton—serves five years with the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, then seeks out and reports the most squalid side of life to publish *Down and Out in Paris and London* as "George Orwell." Obviously he did not wish to affront the family; his father, a glacial and remote figure anyway after his little son was packed off to English schools in the usual stony upper-middle English way, seems not to have forgiven Orwell for resigning from the police.

But why the melodramatic shift from the police to the most awful ill-paying restaurant jobs in Paris and London? Why, long before he avowed himself a "Socialist," this need to saturate himself in what reactionary ideologists now sniffily call not poverty but its "subculture," the veritable bottom?

Stansky and Abrahams make it clear that Orwell always wanted to be a writer. In that sense his Labour and left-wing critics were right to charge that he was on the outside, taking notes. Nevertheless, the "old Etonian" never lost his fine upper-class edge looking down at the lower; unlike his first publisher, Victor Gollancz, who knew nothing about it, Orwell did know that oppression, hunger, and dirt never improve the character. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* Orwell scandalized Gollancz and the Left Book Society by affirming that yes, the working classes do smell.

At the same time Orwell despised his own class, railed against Auden and Spender as the "pansy left," and "the sophisticated cosmopolitan scum who gave Dali his livelihood." He was entirely on his own. The most important sentence for me in the four volumes of Orwell's *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*: "The real problem of our time is to restore the sense of absolute right and wrong when the belief that it used to rest on—that is, the belief in personal immortality—has been destroyed. This demands faith, which is a different thing from credulity."

Orwell said that Dickens managed to attack everybody and to antagonize nobody. He was jealous of a great novelist's ability to pacify an audience by entertaining it. Orwell, an extraordinary social critic in the great tradition of Hazlitt, Ruskin, Shaw, and Chesterton, antagonized everybody *because* he stimulated them. It is impossible to read anything by Orwell without being changed by it and by him. That itself may invite curiosity about the charged-up man behind so much powerful writing. No doubt Orwell's *Animal Farm*, with its contemptuous attack on communism during the wartime alliance with Russia, helped to alienate many people. The book was rejected even by T. S. Eliot at Faber and Faber. But as the torture scenes in *1984* and the general pressure of feeling plainly show, there was a sadistic side to Orwell as well as the masochism so abundant in *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

Orwell was a master of the downright, loaded sentence. This drastic power has usually been ascribed to his hatred of lies, double-dealing, injustice. He was certainly at his best when exposing. Orwell as man and writer was determined not to shirk anything in the life of his time. Anyone who has looked even a little into British lower-class life knows how exact and right, hideously right, Orwell's detailed exposure is in *The Road to Wigan Pier* and the clawing austerity of postwar British life projected into *1984*. But what has not been remarked is the sputtering emotional force behind a single Orwell sentence. It is not the famous clarity of his pamphleteering but his ferocity—the weight and emphasis he gives to any single observation—that makes one wonder at the source of so much feeling. To turn on everybody like that! One thinks of Swift, Samuel Butler, Carlyle.

Orwell's angry sense of detail, his special capacity to hunt out what made him suitably depressed yet eloquent, represents a still unfathomed commingling of the alienated psyche and the committed writer's realism. There is so much damage in Orwell, plus so much powerful curiosity, that I am grateful for the great research job done in *Orwell: The Transformation. The Unknown Orwell* was a scholarly tour de force. This second volume, though less startling, is equally dense in fact, crisply intelligent, engrossing. As is well known, this biography was written in the face of opposition from Orwell's widow; perhaps this is why it ends, too soon for my taste, on Orwell's return from the Spanish Civil War. He had sided with the anti-Stalinist POUM and was wounded

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just as the Communists got the government to outlaw their opponents on the left and to destroy their base in Catalonia. I would have liked the book to go on to World War II and to learn more of what went into *1984*, the book that made Orwell world famous. It may just have been faltering strength in his last years, but Orwell was certainly self-destructive. His second publisher, Frederick Warburg, was horrified by the decision of a man with pulmonary disease to holiday on a foggy, damp Scottish island.

Orwell: The Transformation is a very shapely and cool book that does not explain Orwell. Can Orwell be "explained"—more than he explained himself in his own books and his many personal essays? Can a critic fathom Orwell where his biographers are understandably content to present fact after fact? I am not sure that Orwell can be explained outside his works. The psychological self and the writer's demon are so embedded and twisted in a mind of such intensity—one self and the other self are so much at each other's service—that I cannot believe one would learn anything more about Orwell than we know now. What we have not had before, in the enormous critical literature on Orwell, is so much exhaustive yet elegant documentation of a life heroic, painful, and still mysterious.

Alfred Kazin

Alfred Kazin is author of *New York Jew* (Knopf).

Three by Irving
by John Irving

(Random House; $15.95)

For a while, when *The World According to Garp* first appeared, it seemed the entire country was divided into Garp-lovers and Garp-haters. Almost everyone had read it, and nobody felt lukewarm about it. War broke out at dinner parties. Instant, permanent enmities developed; on one side was the man dissolving in laughter as he told the whole plot blow by blow, and on the other side was the woman who saw nothing amusing in a story about a nurse who impregnates herself by means of a brain-dead patient. (The choice of sexes for this scenario is deliberate. You could almost say that all Garp-lovers were men and all Garp-haters women, though I've seen that theory fall through on a few occasions.)

There's no hiding that I'm a Garp-hater. I was put off by the book's casual cruelty, by its calculated, unwieldy plot and its staggering long-windedness. And though the commercial puffery was probably no fault of the author's, all those Garp T-shirts and blaring Garp book-dumps did seem excessive. However, this is not to say that I'm a John Irving-hater, by any means. I admire his other writing immensely. He made a wonderful debut with *Setting Free the Bears*, his first novel. That this debut passed relatively unnoticed lends new purpose to *The World According to Garp*: John Irving's sudden, Garp-related fame has now resulted in the collection of all three of his earlier books into one massive volume. *Three by Irving* contains not only *Setting Free the Bears* (1968), but also *The Water-Method Man* (1972) and *The 158-Pound Marriage* (1974).

Setting Free the Bears is a story of two young men careening through Austria on a motorcycle, picking up girls and getting into trouble and—above all else—plotting how to free the animals in the zoo. It's a gargantuan book, both in length and in scope. It plunges dauntlessly into such diverse subjects as Serbo-Croatian politics, pre-war Vienna, and bee-keeping. There's no doubt it was written by someone young. Who else could sustain such manic high spirits, such jaunty heroics? Who else could be so spendthrift with ideas? (Well, actually, John Irving could at any age, as he's since proved.) There are times when this novel is downright exhausting—as youthful exuberance often is. But the author is clearly no beginner, even here. He writes with confidence and style, and he's obviously comfortable with his material.

Setting Free the Bears has some fine humorous passages. (There's a milk-horse accident which, Garp-like, sets you to chuckling but then takes a turn toward pain and disaster, leaving you worried about yourself for finding it amusing in the first place.) But for sheer irrepressible comedy, try the second novel. *The Water-Method Man* is consistently hilarious—an involved and richly textured tale about a graduate student whose life is collapsing about his ears. It contains what must surely be the funniest skiing scene in literature, and a ridiculous, totally plausible Old Low Norse Ballad called "Akthelt and Gunnel." (As always, John Irving gives the impression of snatching his subjects at random, perhaps from defunct encyclopedias.) Here is the hero's description of one section of the ballad:

> Akthelt is dressing and arming himself to go out and fight the ever-warring Greths. He is donning his shin pads and shoulder pads and kidney guards and tin cup, ritualistically shielding and spiking his

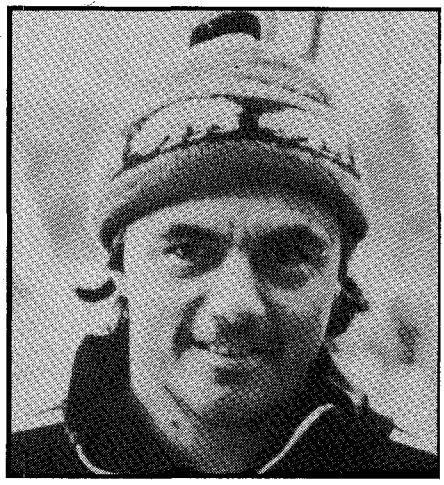

photo of John Irving ©Shyla Irving

> vital parts, while poor Gunnel is wailing at him not to leave her; ritualistically, she is taking off her clothes, unbraiding her hair, unbuckling her anklets, unsheathing her wrists, unthonging her corset, while Akthelt goes on collaring his throat with chains, fastening his coccyx-spikes, etc. Akthelt is trying to explain to Gunnel the object of war (*det henskit af krig*), but she doesn't want to listen. Then Old Thak, Akthelt's father, bursts in on them. Old Thak has been arming and dressing himself for the war too, and his chest zipper, or something, is stuck and he needs help with it. Of course he is embarrassed to see his son's lovely young wife all distraught and half nude, but he remembers his own youth and realizes what Akthelt and Gunnel have been arguing about. So Old Thak attempts an ambiguous gesture; he wants to try to please them both. He gives sweet Gunnel a lusty goose with his thorny old hand, at the same time saying wisely to Akthelt, '*Det henskit af krig er tu overleve*' ('The object of war is to survive it').

There's also an uproarious urologist's waiting-room episode, and a combina-

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tion of duck-hunting and adultery that will leave your ribs sore. A urologist's *waiting* room? *Adultery*? Really. And something about the hero—his ramshackle, helpless style of living—makes him endearingly comical. Late in the novel, he becomes the subject of a documentary film which *Variety* praises, remarking that there's not much interesting in the "rather self-centered and inert main character, but. . . ." But. The *Water-Method Man* is a pure joy.

The 158-Pound Marriage describes the *ménage à quatre* of two married couples. It's recognizably an Irving work—many Austrian references, a wrestling motif, a zoo, a 1954 Zorn-Witwer automobile—but it lacks the expansiveness and the zest of the earlier novels. The two couples' arrangement seems narrow and unhappy; the arrangement itself is the central character, at the expense of the four separate individuals involved in it, who are never clearly visible to us. Possibly, this book represents a kind of catching of the breath. The author may have been reassembling all the energy he so recklessly lavished on the first two novels, and at the same time unconsciously gathering his forces for *The World According to Garp* (which, as even a Garp-hater will admit, must have required prodigious vitality). It does not, therefore, have the all-out, shoot-the-works profligacy that the others had, but it is still a solid story, with flashes of the Irving wit and cockeyed vision.

In *The Water-Method Man*, the hero and his dearest friend are sitting in a tavern, discussing the following subjects:

> . . . international sports; Hieronymus Bosch; the function of the American embassy in Vienna, the neutrality of Austria; Tito's remarkable success; the shocking rise of the bourgeoisie; the boredom of televised golf; the source of Herr Halling's halitosis; why the waitress wore a bra, were her armpits shaved or shaggy, and who would ask her; the advisability of chasing slivowitz with beer; the price of Semperit radial tires in Boston, of bourbon in Europe in general, of hashish in Vienna in particular. . . .

You might also say these are the subjects John Irving discusses in his novels—these and many others. He is one of our most original writers: not so very kind, perhaps, but infinitely inventive, and given to spectacular leaps of the imagination.

Anne Tyler

Anne Tyler's most recent novel is *Morgan's Passing* (Knopf).

Twenty-Five Years of Dissent edited by Irving Howe

(Methuen; $8.95)

There are many good things in this anthology of essays and reviews from the New York democratic socialist quarterly, *Dissent*. (The anthology, like the magazine, is edited by Irving Howe.) But the piece I enjoyed most was Chandler Davidson's case history of "Willie Mae."

Is there such a thing as the "culture of poverty"? Or rather is the shiftlessness that Oscar Lewis and others regard as one of its chief characteristics really peculiar to the poor? Davidson thinks not, and he has a neat and original way of demonstrating his point, through the life history of a woman he calls "Willie Mae."

"The subject is a female, age forty-seven," his 1974 essay begins, and it goes on to conclude, after several pages of an unsparing case study, that Willie Mae's lifestyle "exemplifies many of the characteristics of the 'culture of poverty.'"

"She has an aversion to work. . . . She is the paradigm of the 'present-time oriented' individual, sometimes justifying this by the pain and suffering she has endured."

"She compulsively spends money on clothes and adornments," he records. "Her kin networks are remarkable for their pathology." The men in her life are caught up in "the pursuit of sex and alcohol and late-night adventure . . . that admixture of impulsiveness and irresponsibility that epitomizes a 'lower-class culture.'"

And so on in this vein, until Davidson is ready to reveal that "Willie Mae" is a pseudonym for . . . Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. He has taken no liberties with the "known facts or published rumors" of her life, he says, "except the one most commonly taken in sociological accounts of the poor; I have selected the facts to suit a predetermined interpretation of an individual, and I have used some loaded words to describe them."

That seems to me to be not only "most excellent fooling," but a point fairly and sharply taken, not at the expense of the Widow O, but against the whole sloppy and prejudiced sociological literature on poverty and the poor.

Very little in this volume is as much fun as that example. Very little, I suppose, in the experience of the past quarter of a century has been much fun to the intelligent, serious-minded people who read *Dissent*. But Davidson's essay does exemplify certain virtues shared by most, if not all, of the essays that editor Howe has put in his shop window.

They are heretical. They are making a serious effort to understand hard and important matters. They are sharply written and (I suspect) sharply edited. They convey a certain generosity of spirit. And they show little tolerance for cant.

A few years ago, it seemed that socialists in the United States, democratic or otherwise, were an endangered species. In the future, it may well be that the ideas and aspirations of democratic socialism may once again attract Americans, as they did in the years before 1917.

Most of those who have asked, as Werner Sombart did in the title of his 1906 book, "Why is there no socialism in the United States?" have come to the same conclusion as he did: that it was above all the exceptional abundance of American life, the cheap land, the cheap food, the high wages, and the high hopes of wealth for the lucky individual, that robbed socialism of its appeal. "All Socialist utopias," as Sombart put it in a famous phrase, "foundered on roast beef and apple pie."

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It may be, as Daniel Bell, himself an heir to, or graduate from, the socialist tradition, has argued, that we are watching "the end of American exceptionalism." Certainly it does not look likely that the United States will indefinitely continue to enjoy exceptionally cheap energy, or exceptionally high wages. It is at least possible that it will therefore not remain exceptionally immune to the appeal of socialist ideas.

That is as may be. What is certainly true is that while socialism as an organized political movement has indeed counted for little in the US since 1917, socialism as an intellectual tradition has had a considerable influence. It is far more important, in fact, than many people realize. To cite just two examples, modern neoconservatism paradoxically has its roots in the socialist movement: most of the editors of *The Public Interest* either once considered themselves socialists or were influenced by friends and teachers who did. And the new left of the 1960s was far more influenced by the old, socialist left than most journalists realized. Behind each of the heroes of the new left, so to speak, there stood a veteran socialist counselor: behind Tom Hayden and SDS, for example, there was the socialist Michael Harrington; behind Bob Moses and the Mississippi summer project there was the socialist Bayard Rustin; even behind Martin Luther King, the socialist A. J. Muste.

And so it ought to surprise no one to find some of the best minds in America writing for this obscure and struggling periodical: Robert Heilbroner, Paul Goodman, Michael Harrington, Irving Howe himself, as well as foreign writers of the caliber of Octavio Paz, Roy Medvedev, and Ignazio Silone.

Nor need anyone be surprised that they addressed themselves, often before anyone else had attempted serious analysis, to trying to understand the wild new currents that were tearing through American life in this turbulent period. Here for example is Brendan Sexton writing, in 1969, that "the middle-class left may find itself isolated if it accepts the standard mythology about workers." Here is Alice Rossi, in 1970, relating the women's movement to demographic patterns and economic pressures. Here is David Spitz, as early as 1966, taking the hide off Herbert Marcuse's bunk about "repressive tolerance."

Here, in short, are many good things for those who are curious about what is happening in America, and who do not limit their vision of the American future to a linear projection of the recent past. One last compliment to a civilized book: unlike so many socialist sectarians, Howe and those who write in his magazine are free from the illusion that they have a monopoly on the keys to salvation. Two of the best essays here are one by Howe himself which gracefully acknowledges, as socialists often do not, the debt to liberalism: "criticism of Jefferson's inadequacies is made possible by the adequacy of Jefferson's principles"; and one by Heilbroner which, even more daringly, acknowledges the relevance of certain insights of conservatism to socialists, and asks, "can it be detrimental to the cause of socialism to consider and reconsider the nature of man?"

Godfrey Hodgson

Godfrey Hodgson is associate editor of the *New Statesman* and author of *America in Our Time* (Vintage).

Neighbors
by Thomas Berger

(Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence; $9.95)

It is a mystery of literary criticism that Thomas Berger, one of the most ambitious, versatile, and entertaining of contemporary novelists, is hardly ever mentioned in the company of America's major writers. He is a wit, a fine caricaturist, and his prose crackles with Rabelaisian vitality. His phenomenal ear for oddnesses of speech appropriates as readily the grey malapropisms of the silent majority in *Reinhart in Love* ("I know you'll be taking advantage of the G.I. Bill," says the hero's dad, "full tuition paid and in addition this generous emollient per the month of expenses. A wonderful opportunity, and one never before vouchfaced to the American veteran.") as the winning tall-tale garrulousness of *Little Big Man*, a savory reminiscence of the Cheyenne Indians in frontier days.

Crazy in Berlin, the first of Berger's 10 novels, ushers us into the jumbled, seedy, conspiratorial atmosphere of the divided German capital after World War II, and no work of American fiction or reportage about that place and period carries a greater feeling of authenticity. But the special Berger touch is his seesaw from the grim chaotic backdrop to the high spirits of the susceptible young hero, Carlo Reinhart, a corporal medic from a midwestern town, who finds army life a liberating initiation into sex and politics. He has arrived at that intoxicated state in which one can "solve equations, craft epigrams, make otherwise invulnerable women, and bluff formidable men, when people say, 'Why *Reinhart*!' and rivals wax bitter." Enough fools and bureaucrats surround the hero to summon up reminders of Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*, but Berger is not inclined to take an anti-establishment stand or score an ideological point. The world fascinates him and he knocks about in it somewhat like a stunned bull, suspicious but eager for further investigation. When it comes to impressing critics and readers, he may have been vanquished (with the exception of the best-selling *Little Big Man*, which appeared at a time when Indian grievances had caught hold of the popular imagination) by his own many-sidedness, his refusal to rest his finger on the self-righteous pulse of the nation.

Moreover, it cannot be said that he ever writes from a universal, or even an ordinary eye-level perspective. He is a magic realist and, as in the New York City paintings of Richard Estes, Berger's focus, his grasp of detail, is sharper and smaller than life. He will allow something infinitesimal to catch his eye and brood upon it, even as he overlooks a larger emotion or design. In the past the disturbing effect of this was somewhat offset by the sheer cascade into his bulky novels of tangy physical images, raunchy episodes, and eccentric wayside characters with an extravagant gift of gab. In his new book, *Neighbors*, there are no such fringe benefits. This strange exasperating little story has been pared down to the taunting colloquy among four characters on a dead-end street in an unnamed suburb. We see them through a pane that is blindingly clear and yet so distorting as to make them

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seem demented.

A nondescript middle-class couple, Earl and Enid Reese, regular in habits and staid in manner, are suddenly descended upon by new neighbors. Ramona, a girl in East Indian turban and spike-heeled sandals, barges in, drinks wine out of her host's glass, and makes suggestive overtures. Harry, a rangy blond giant, slaps Earl on the rump, demands money to buy them all food at a nonexistent takeout shop, and scowls at a contribution of $30 as "chintzy." Outrage succeeds outrage. The intruders lie without a blink, Harry riffles through Earl's checkbook, Ramona appears in the master bedroom rolled up in a towel, both accuse him of attempting rape.

The ingeniousness of their abuse expands in proportion to the hero's willingness to be intimidated, to placate them; and it is this vulnerability that increasingly astonishes the reader. After a harrowing night during which he has had no sleep, eaten only a few strands of cold spaghetti, and been shoved face down by Harry into the swamp behind his house, Earl Reese sits in his overstuffed chair reviewing the situation, envisioning the intruders as future neighbors. "He would wave across yards, he might even shout a greeting now and then. Sending an Xmas card was a must."

Many provocations later (Harry has taken a potshot at him, disparaged his wife and daughter, and called him disgusting), Earl is protesting: "Look, I really can use your friendship." What follows in the way of ordeal by fire, near-strangulation by water hose, desertion by nearest kin, and obscenity from strangers—crescendoes to such an anarchic pitch that we can easily imagine the author to have succumbed to an orgy of paranoia.

He is in fact terrifyingly methodical and consciously satanic in this psychological chiller whose hero is victimized mainly by his own weakness and ambivalence. The plot dramatizes a conviction Berger has held for a long time. In the fictional foreword to *Little Big Man*, the narrator observes: "Each of us, no matter how humble, from day to day finds himself in situations in which he has the choice of acting either heroically or craven." Is Berger telling us in *Neighbors* that cravenness, uncertainty about our own feelings, breeds aggression in others? That obsequiousness is really distrust, and once suspected will be returned in kind? *Neighbors* is a cool study in taking advantage, a chess game in which each move is followed inexorably by the countermove the player leaves himself open for. The victim is at the mercy of some force not larger than himself as happens in Kafka's *The Trial* but, far more grueling, exactly equal to himself. That is to say, everyone gets his just psychological deserts.

If that is what the author means, the lesson, though suspenseful, is no lark for the reader. There are surely fragments of déjà vu experiences—anyone watching a man who has had too much to drink is familiar with the unpleasant skid from playful intimacy to hostility that the book's protagonists repeatedly undergo; and there are glints in their outlandish behavior of our own more routine mistakes. Unfortunately, nothing is quite so detrimental to well-being or good reading as such a dogged delivery of insights. In other stories of persecution—Saul Bellow's *The Victim*, Bernard Malamud's "The Last Mohican," even Nabokov's far more iniquitous *Laughter in the Dark*—it is our acceptance of the moral and the motive that makes the torment bearable. But *Neighbors* demands our attention entirely

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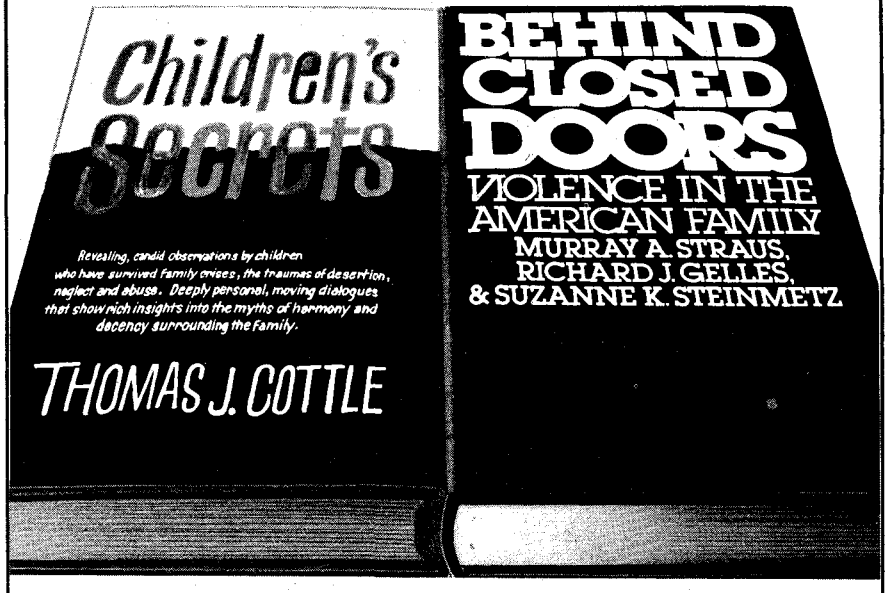
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THE END OF ACTION

In times of action nothing much occurred.
A trance was lifted, vagrant sounds arose,
Settled unshaken to their proper close,
And paused an instant, waiting for a word.

My days were crowded with the wrong intent,
Cross words at noon, of chaos, heard alone;
Messages, diagrams of languor known,
Or love: a phrasing that does not relent.

Those sun-wrought days would bind no natural trance—
To shower voices flat from the given sky,
And leave my own an echo it could try.
I spoke as one exiled from truth and chance.

Yet once some luck of recollection grew
From just such holdings as could not be shared
Until the end of action was prepared,
When all the words might circle, or a few.

David Bromwich

for the tactics of the game.

Berger intends also to make a larger social comment, showing us Everyman (Enid, Earl), or at any rate conventional Middle America, poignantly tempted by the footloose, resourceful, aging beatniks, Harry and Ramona. "This is quite exciting, really," observes Earl to his wife. "It took all these things to happen for a whole new vista to open up before us." The speed with which the vista snaps shut reminds us that Berger has never, even in his more rollicking inventions, seen the world in a kindly light. Shortcomings, infirmities, slights, and jolts are what capture his most ardent scrutiny. In *Neighbors* he demolishes any fantasies we may still cherish of suburban retreat or the laconic but helpful village handyman. When the unpalatable Greavy briefly shows up, it is either to inquire whether there is a whore on the premises or to boast gleefully that the cable on his autowrecker "can snep off and whop back, and it wool take your head clean off." We are being warned, in this latest and sparest of Berger's fictions, that we cannot count on the better side of man.

Isa Kapp

Isa Kapp has written reviews and articles for the *New Leader*, *Commentary*, and the *American Scholar*.

When the Lights Go Down by Pauline Kael

(Holt, Rinehart and Winston; $18.95, $9.95 paper)

This collection includes Pauline Kael's complete output for the *New Yorker* since 1975, and, remarkably, there is not a single valley among these 200-odd pieces; every one is a peak of expressive intelligence and insight into movies as well as into the cultural moods they reflect and create. That Kael managed to maintain this ebullient pitch of performance, week after week, seems a miracle of critical vitality when you consider how few of these movies were inspiring. Still, even if you didn't like most of the movies she discusses here, that's no reason for passing up this book. It may, on the contrary, be the very reason you should buy it. For if you think of culture as a self-contained whole in which pleasure lost in one genre can be recovered in another, then Kael's reviews can seem the best justification for the worst of these movies. Perhaps the only good thing you can say for the appalling *Seven Beauties* is that it prompted her imperishable pan—a review that fulfills the comic promise of its title, "Seven Fatties." And surely it helps to square the account of *Equus* that it unleashed Kael's decisive hoot of derision: try *not* reading a piece that begins, "The only honest sound I heard during the two hours and eighteen minutes of *Equus* was the snoring of the man in the row behind me."

Such polished sass is a Kael trademark. So is brilliance, casual erudition, and the kind of *New Yorker* chic that waftily assumes we were among the felicitous few at Lincoln Center last night. But not so far underneath the armor of her sophistication, Kael is quite simply gaga over movies; as the titles of some of her previous books—*I Lost it at the Movies*, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, *Going Steady*, and *Reeling*—suggest, there is a spot of her that is forever fan. When the lights go down she roots for the movie to knock her out of her seat; and when it leaves her sitting there, listening to the snoring of the man behind her, she feels betrayed. The filmmakers have abused her trust and her enthusiasm, and she rightly lets them have it.

Kael may be waspish, but through 30 years of film reviewing her heart has remained fresh. It's easy to see why she recently hired herself out as a kind of film doctor; she rarely tires of picking over the bones of the latest monument to somnolence, searching for the ghost of its possibility, the one bit that might have made the film work, "at some level." Levels are another of her specialties. Pop-classic, rock-horror satire, visceral thriller, morality comedy, *film noir* in red—she has as many as there are kinds of movies. She's so ardent and flexible that her pans of movies that miss on every level don't seem cruel. Which may be one reason why she gives her readers so unmitigated a dose of pleasure: it eases their guilt over enjoying her memorable aggressions.

Kael's forte as a critic is for what makes stories films—things like directors, lighting, pace, energy, and actors. She's superb on the way an actor's face projects character, or his discomfort in character. Thus Anne Bancroft in *The Turning Point* has "a gnarled ascetic look, and the worst case of nobility in the eyebrows since Greer Garson." And Susannah York in *Conduct Unbecoming* "gives one of her lewd mouth flirty performances; the invitation 'You can get dirty with me' is spelled out in her lipwetting smiles." Kael is also good at evoking the dramatic possibilities of

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bodies, the biggest thing on the screen. Her celebrated essay on Cary Grant, included here, is full of this kind of appreciation. And she lavishes a similar attention on Burt Reynolds, whose liberal cop in *Hustle* strikes a false note because "Liberal piousness isn't his style—it doesn't go with the way he moves." She can capture the exact degree of conviction in a voice, and she's marvelous at catching staginess in an actor's readings. She also has an eye for the chemistry of eroticism, for the shadings and credibility of what another critic calls musk. Indeed, sexual tension

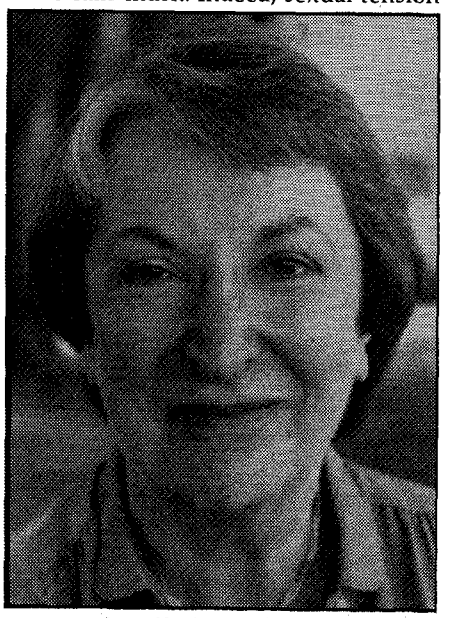

photo of Pauline Kael by Joseph Morgenstern

is one of her favorite categories of judgment, and again and again she shows how vital it is for dramatic tension.

If her cleverness sometimes has a little vaudeville clinging to it ("*Quintet* might be *Ivan The Terrible Part III*—the film no one was waiting for") and if her "I'm damned if I'm going to be awed by high-culture" tone occasionally strikes one as a pose (the prose equivalent of putting your hands on your hips and saying, Really!), more often these qualities come across as vivacity of intelligence and a robust humanism. On the surface at least, Kael's judgments can seem inconsistent. But if Kael faults Satyajit Ray for intensifying the ironies in *Distant Thunder*, while censuring John Huston for not "punching up" the ironic moments in *The Man Who Would Be King*, the wavering judgments reflect a feel for contexts, not inconsistency. They remind us that every film has a unique center of gravity; what works in one place won't necessarily work in another.

Kael's critical latitude, her willingness to deal with each film in its own terms, is nicely complemented by the reach of her human sympathies. She has an extraordinary respect for the complications in the lives of the misfits, weirdos, malcontents, drop-outs, and druggies who make up so large a part of the life on the screen. Yet she's so consistently tough-minded that her moments of sensitivity always seem genuine; you never feel she's trying to show you what a fine liberal she is. When, for example, she worries aloud over the "borderline insensitivity" in the depiction of the mentally ill in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (her point of comparison is to the photographs of Diane Arbus), it seems an act of moral intelligence, not a hand-wringing gesture. But to me the most moving example of Kael's perceptive compassion comes in an essay on the "aesthetic morality" of the young directors. The subject is *Jaws*, and specifically the scene where Robert Shaw tells that horrifying story about the sharks feeding, day by day, on the survivors of a torpedoed ship. The name Shaw gave to the ship was the *Indianapolis*, the name of a heavy cruiser sunk in the closing days of the war. When I saw the film, I assumed that this was how it was. But Kael points out that in fact no one knows how those sailors died. So why didn't the filmmakers use the name of a fictitious ship? Weren't they aware of "the nightmarish pain their grotesque embroidery" would inflict on the families of the sailors? They weren't; she handsomely was. Her splendid questions take you right to the tacky heart of the film's director, Steven Spielberg (in case you had any doubt). But more: they suggest one answer to a question posed in another essay—why are people afraid of movies?

In fact, Kael does not approve of the fear of violence in movies; she thinks it is a mask for the fear of feeling, perhaps even for the fear of race ("What may be behind all this is the repression of the race issue. People feel there's violence out there and they want to shut it out"). This may be. But isn't it also possible that the fear of violence has less ignoble grounds? When does violence serve a dramatic or expressive purpose, and when is it merely a convenient way to punctuate a film—to build tension or kill off a character or simply end the film, in the late 1960s manner, with an apocalyptic gesture? And what of the difference between violence that expresses personal rage and so has a human ground, and the kind of impersonal violence that is as unfelt as the evening news? Is this special effects violence nothing more than sensationalism, or does it express the macabre truth about our time of political famines and mass technological death? I wish Kael had let the jury stay out a little longer on these questions instead of polemicizing against the tyranny of tepid taste.

No one, of course, will agree with all of Kael's judgments. Her review of *Autumn Sonata* seems to me wrongheaded ("Does anybody really believe a word of

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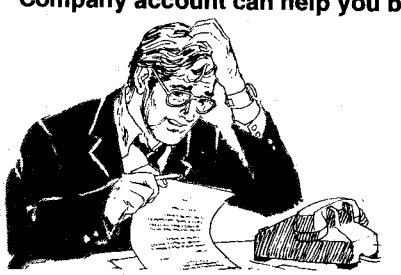

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this movie?"): the only instance in this immense collection where she imputes an idea to a film and then goes on, brilliantly, to review the idea, not the film. And was *The Story of Adèle H.* "a great movie"? I remember it as being claustral. But Kael's review makes me want to see it again—and this time with her own passionate and intelligent attention. She spreads enthusiasm; she makes interest. This, I suspect, is why a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* felt no embarrassment in calling her a great critic; and when I look back on the pleasure she has made possible for me over the years, I feel none in agreeing with him.

Jack Beatty

Brief Reviews

The Life of Lorena Hickock, E.R.'s Friend by Doris Faber

(William Morrow; $12.95)

When Lorena Hickock met Eleanor Roosevelt in 1928, she was 35 and one of the most respected women journalists in the country. As a reporter for the Associated Press, she covered FDR's presidential campaign in 1932, and quickly formed a close friendship with Mrs. Roosevelt. By election day the two women were virtually inseparable. Hickock's career in journalism essentially ended the evening that Eleanor Roosevelt read aloud a draft of FDR's inaugural address and she never thought to report back on it to her office. Why this resolutely ambitious woman suddenly abandoned her career and what changes ensued both in her life and in the life of Eleanor Roosevelt are the subject of Doris Faber's biography, *The Life of Lorena Hickock.*

Faber's book is based upon the voluminous correspondence between Hickock and Eleanor Roosevelt (at their most intimate stage they wrote daily) that lasted 30 years, until Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962. When they met, these two high-strung women were struggling against crippling self-doubts; their friendship strengthened them both. Mrs. Roosevelt admired Hickock's assertiveness and her stunning success in a male-dominated field, and found herself leaning on her for advice, encouragement, and strength. Hickock, sensing Mrs. Roosevelt's insecurity, and desperately lonely herself, wholeheartedly assumed the role of confidante. She was soon consumed by an almost reverential admiration for the shy, ungainly first lady. But over the years the friendship grew gradually less insular, as Mrs. Roosevelt enthusiastically tackled her increasing political commitments and began to play an active role in the presidency. After their first few contented years together, Hickock found herself continually struggling with the knowledge that her ardor for Eleanor Roosevelt would never again be fully reciprocated.

How intimate were Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickock? Faber repeatedly insists "there is no possible way to plumb the precise nature of the relationship between these two women during this period when their letters contained repeated hints of a physical attachment." In the end this emphasis on the question of lesbianism is misplaced. What this correspondence reveals, even early on, is two women as different temperamentally as they were physically (Hickock's colleagues affectionately likened her to a police matron), each of whom found in the other remarkable intellectual compatibility and emotional sustenance. All evidence, despite Eleanor Roosevelt's early letters to Hickock, which contain passionate, unabashed avowals of love, suggests that Eleanor had only vague notions about homosexuality; she certainly wouldn't have thought to apply such a vulgar label to her companionship with Hickock. (Hickock, on the other hand, had a number of lesbian encounters as a young woman and a few half-hearted affairs when her relationship with Eleanor abated.) These effusive letters, childlike in their enthusiasm, nevertheless contain unmistakable clues about her understanding of the friendship and about her approach to life in general: "My pictures are all up & I have you in my sitting room where I can look at you most of my waking hours! I can't kiss you so I kiss your picture goodnight and goodmorning! Don't laugh! This is the first day I've had no letter & I miss it sadly but it is good discipline. . . ."

As Hickock gradually came to realize, Mrs. Roosevelt possessed a rigid sense of moral rectitude and insisted upon maintaining restraint, order, and self-discipline in every sphere of life. She seems to have remained impervious to, or at least delicately refused to acknowledge, the exact nature of what she called "certain cravings" in Hickock, and never abandoned her deluded hope that someday her friend would marry. She attributed Hick's stormy fits of pique (usually aroused by Eleanor's crowded schedule that left little time for Hickock) to ill-health and suggested with motherly concern that she see a doctor. She even succeeded once in putting the voracious, hard-drinking Hickock on a starvation diet. Hickock dutifully lost 20 pounds, but Eleanor's brisk response was "stick to your diet, lose twenty pounds more & you'll forget you are forty." But Hickock, much as she strove to emulate her friend, ultimately failed in all such attempts at self-abnegation. What was worse, she ultimately failed to preserve her independence and became financially as well as emotionally dependent on Mrs. Roosevelt in her later years.

Doris Faber must be given credit for unearthing a wealth of fascinating information about this odd pair, but her biography is marred by pedestrian and sometimes mawkish writing. Her first chapters on Hickcock's wretched childhood and adolescence are curiously flat, and her fear of appearing judgmental about the questionable aspects of the Roosevelt-Hickock involvement results in a bland, unimaginative rendering of two vibrant women and their lopsided relationship.

Dorothy Wickenden

Collected Poems 1944-1979 by Kingsley Amis

(Viking; $11.95)

Poems written by good novelists are often moving, but rarely graceful. A certain ungainliness tends to shoulder its way into their verse. With his new *Collected Poems 1944-1979*, Kingsley Amis, a very good novelist indeed, proves himself to be that exceptional creature, an amphibian at home in either poetry or prose.

Roughly chronological, the poems tend with advancing years toward greater clarity and deeper cynicism. The Auden-influenced "Letter to Elisabeth," which sunnily opens the book, offers passages miles distant from anything in his later, harsher verse:

> At last, love, love has taught me to speak straight,

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To make my body walk without a strut;
Dearest, on our first anniversary
Nothing exists now that can go awry.

The book concludes, some 150 pages later, with "a smart kick in the crotch."

Rhymed, metrical poems preponderate throughout the 35 years represented here. Amis has a light touch—in both light and serious verse. He also possesses what might be deemed a novelist's gift for rapidly sketching character, as in this stanza about a pretty girl glimpsed while the poet awaits a bus:

At fifty feet I watched her stop,
Bite at a glove, then veer
Aside into some pointless shop,
Never to reappear.

What might easily have been nothing but a poet's fancy becomes, with that lovely "bite at a glove," an actual girl.

One of the 1950s' Angry Young Men, Amis has by now surely excelled the others not only in the quality and range of his work, but in the potency and verve of his anger. Amis, to transpose a phrase from one of his essays, harbors a "catholic distaste" for most of his subjects. In a number of poems ("Their Oxford," "Festival Notebook," "Crisis Song") he plays a sort of snappish reporter, whose gleefully telegraphed message usually is: "My worst fears are confirmed. . . ."

A fear of old age and of death—a fear central to his dark but incandescent comic novel *Ending Up*—appears in much of his recent verse, prodding him into inspired outbursts of ill-temper. Yet while such outbursts may disguise, they cannot ultimately conceal the compassion that is the taproot of all his work. This emergence of compassion from anger and disappointment is capsulized in three lines from the elegy to his father: "I'm sorry you had to die / To make me sorry / You're not here now." Amis is, sometimes despite himself, an extremely likable figure.

Perhaps Kingsley Amis savors as much as the next poet a seascape, a singing bird, a sheep-dotted hillside, but the reader will detect few hints here of a profound love of nature. Nor are there many indications of an interest in any

Correction:
An error was made in Alfred Kazin's essay, "The European Writers in Exile," in the April 12 issue of *TNR*. A sentence in the last paragraph should have read: "The austerity of this is breathtaking."

My son, the reader.

I just found out my kid has a heart. He joined the MS READ-a-thon, the program that lets our children read their favorite books, and parents, friends—anyone, donate a few cents for every book they read.

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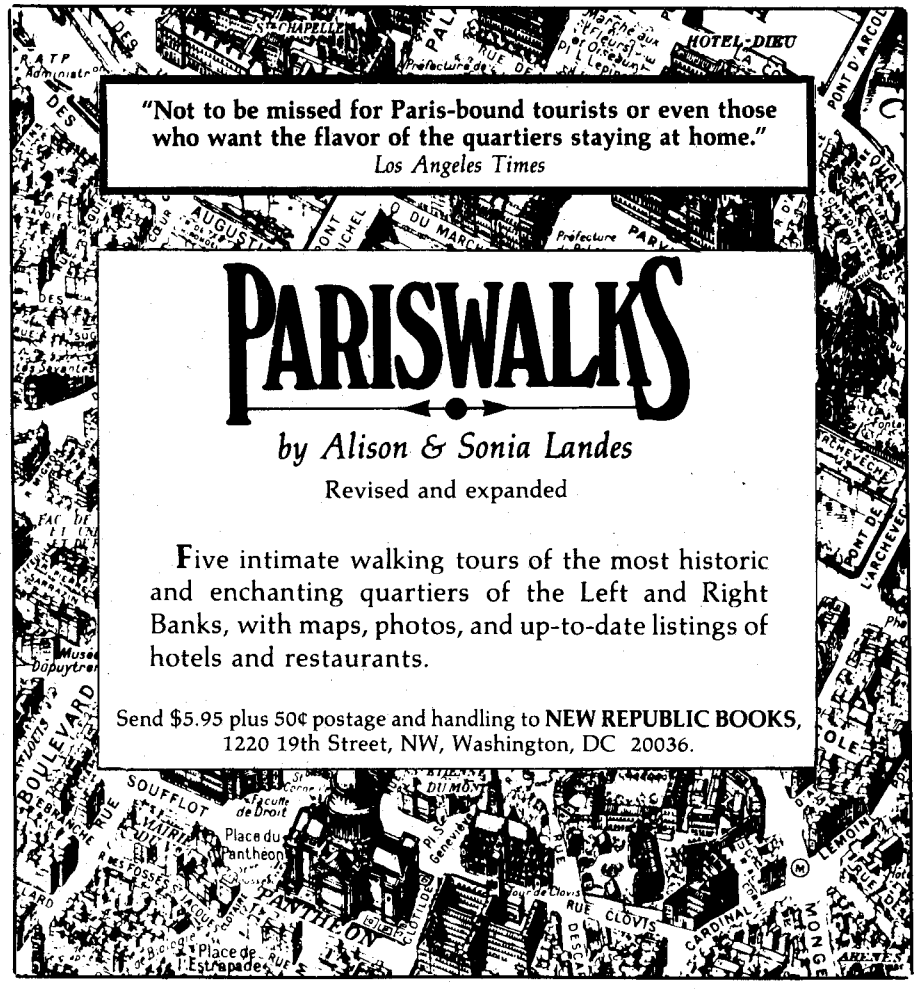
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sort of "experimental verse." Nor—to extend a catalogue of absences—is there much that could be called metaphysically deep. What is to be found here, and in abundance, are euphony, concision, and a feral wit. The book is a delight.

Brad Leithauser

Brad Leithauser is a writer and poet.

Correspondence, *from page 7*

Carter has been a good president, even if he has not solved the energy-inflation problem. No president could have prevented OPEC from increasing their prices in the last year so much that they contributed eight percent to our inflation rate.

I believe you reject Carter because he is a southerner and a Baptist. In other words, you and the Kennedy group are effete snobs.

Charles Reed
Waco, Texas

Early eulogy

To the editors:

Mark Harris's review of *The Jack Conroy Reader* (*TNR*, March 1) reads like a memoir—warm, personal, obviously affectionate in intent toward the older writer. But it is too soon for eulogy. Moreover, the review contains errors that may mislead *TNR* readers unfamiliar with Conroy's wrok. Born in 1899 (*not* 1889), Conroy at 80 continues to write his autobiography, review, and help younger writers; and he still walks the two miles to the grocery store.

Harris's anecdote of Conroy slipping out of the back door—"his night had now begun"—adds to the spurious legend of Conroy as "hopeless soak" (Murray Kempton's term, I believe) in Chicago. One might read Harris's words, "His night had now begun," as a metaphor for literary oblivion. In fact the rest of his review seems to support this interpretation. The general impression then is that Conroy's creative life ended with *A World to Win* (1935), that he published little during a decade (1940-50), and that, like Bellow's Humboldt, he died, destitute and forgotten. A friend who read the review asked me whether Conroy were already dead!

Two long passages quoted in the reivew might further confuse the reader. In the context of the review both passages appear to come from *The Disinherited*. Harris does not mention that the first is from *The Disinherited* (1933); nor that the second is from "The Fields of Golden Glow" (1972), published in *New Letters*.

Douglas Wixson
University of Missouri
Rolla, Missouri

Foreign auto fiends

To the editors:

In an article in the March 15 *New Republic* describing the auto industry's battle against the foreign import fiends, Stephen Chapman makes the statement, "the current problems of Ford and the US (auto) industry as a whole are the product of sudden and unexpected changes, and are not likely to last very long."

That is the type of fallacy-ridden mind-set that produced Chrysler's, and now Ford's, debacle. The American auto industry is in irreparable decline, and not easily rejuvenated by the "small, high mileage car" fix that will take years of retooling on the part of the car companies and not even then reduce the desirability of small foreign cars such as Datsun, Toyota, Honda, Fiat, and Volkswagon. Is fuel scarcity only a temporary problem? American auto makers are finally meeting that bugaboo of free enterprise, competition. Scrambling for a response has begun too late.

Jeffrey Nelligan
Williamstown, Massachusetts

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"Once to every man and nation," an old Protestant hymn intones, "comes the moment to decide." Surely it comes more than once; but twice or thrice, or 10 times, it's just such moments that Jimmy Carter dreads. This is no mean matter to the country, because governing requires choice. Of course, he pretends to choose all the time; exaggeration and philippic are second nature to him, earnests of sincerity, commitment, decisiveness. Earnests are necessary for those who are neither sincere nor committed nor decisive. But they do fool people. So readers of last Sunday's *Times* might well have been surprised by the headline reporting that the "President is Considering 'Coercive Actions' on Iran." Hadn't he just the week before announced what were touted as coercive actions? On second thought, hadn't he announced those measures, more or less, five months earlier? Even now, though, they're not really coercive, or even very forceful: food and medicine are still exempt from the sanctions we've imposed. No one, certainly, expects them to be included in any restrictions which may be put on the Iranian commerce of our putative allies—if they turn out to be allies at all. Carter wants to punish the Iranians but not hurt them. Potential adversaries are now forewarned: if they make war on us, the president will shut down their consulate in Chicago. So he finally did ship out the Iranian diplomats who were supposed to have been expelled in the first round of resolute responses. But all those Iranian proconsuls you saw on the tube as they boarded airplanes bound for Tehran don't exhaust the lot. The State Department, it turns out, can't account for more than 100 Iranian attachés and chargés who were posted in the US and may still be here. While the few handfuls of the imam's visible plenipotentiaries left our shores, batches of Iranian students were also being deported. Not an especially bold or discriminating act, if you think about it. But what were these students studying anyway? Agriculture? Engineering? Medicine? Theology, maybe? No. Prepping for war is what they were doing, at The Citadel and Norwich University, and in various other military academies around the country. Just why, nearly a half year into the captivity of our diplomats, and more than a year and a half after the establishment of a fanatically anti-American dictatorship in Iran, we were still training men for that country's army and air force is a question no one, not even the monotonously flatulent Hodding Carter, could possibly answer. The sad truth is that no one asked.

The president is timid about expelling people we should be eager to be rid of. And he is just as timid letting in those he and we should welcome. Cubans are once again voting with their feet, and voting for freedom. That's the meaning of the nearly 10,000 brave souls who spontaneously took refuge at the serendipitously unguarded Peruvian embassy in Havana. Jody Powell assures us that Jimmy Carter is "deeply concerned" for their "safety and freedom." Well, he's deeply concerned for the safety and freedom of 3500 of them. The safety and freedom of the rest, he leaves to others. Carter has no sense of how to wage ideological war, and at a time when ideological war is everywhere being waged against us. He could have offered to take in all those who've made the demonstrative break with the regime. But his parsimonious spirit won out over the instinctive generosity of the American people. So now there'll be squalid negotiations to place 200 people here and 300 there. Castro will laugh at the ineptness of it all. Cuban sources say that the refugees are all homosexuals anyway—all the men, all the women, all the children. *Gusanos*, they've been called by the political police—worms, parasites. It is a characteristic of totalitarians that they call their political opponents animal names: pigs, jackals, hyenas, dogs, and now worms. A *gusano* is henceforth a term of honor. Those other *gusanos* who might want to defy Castro, perhaps by refusing to have their kids sent to Ethiopia and Yemen as vanguard cannon fodder of the revolution, will be disheartened by the petty display of Jimmy Carter's chintzyness.

During the aborted negotiations over the transfer of the American hostages from the hands of the hoodlums in the embassy to the jurisdiction of what purports to be a government, Foreign Minister Ghotbzadeh was suddenly transformed into a moderate. For months he'd been perceived as a fanatic, a hardliner, a zealot, a cynic at best. The epiphany happened first, I think, on ABC News and in the dispatches of the *Washington Post*. I haven't noticed whether Ghotbzadeh is still a moderate, but I sense that Bani-Sadr, the embodiment of the moderate possibility in the reign of the mullahs, is himself on the way to losing the moderate designation. This may be a preliminary to the naming of Iraq's Saadam Husayn as moderate of the week. Husayn is now vying for Dr. Brzezinski's favor to replace Bani-Sadr as our best hope in a tight spot. How one becomes a moderate without changing views or behavior is still a mystery. But of course, I'm one of those irreconcilables who can't see what makes Arafat a moderate, except that George Ball says he is. One possible explanation for how extremists are suddenly perceived as moderates is the historical amnesia of the press. My friend John Kifner, reporting in the *New York Times* from Tehran on the Easter visit of various clerics to the hostages, wrote that Bishop Hilaire Capucci "had been imprisoned for supporting the Palestinian cause." That's moderate enough, I suppose. But he'd actually been imprisoned for gun-running and smuggling explosives to the PLO, like the ones that were used in the terrorist action earlier this month at the kindergarten of Kibbutz Misgav Am. Is that moderate?

As I write, Jimmy Carter is in the 166th day of his White House captivity. It's self-inflicted, of course, and he has allowed himself forays as far as the Washington Hilton Hotel. In the last months of his presidency, Lyndon Johnson also closeted himself in the reassuringly grand chambers of the executive mansion. Richard Nixon was not so lucky; he could find consolation and comfort only outside the country. In that, he had one up on Carter. Johnson lost his popular mandate, and hid out from the people, because of a particular policy he insisted on pursuing—wrongheadedly, I think, and much worse. Nixon was a criminal; but for the grace of Ford, which he could arrange, he would be on his way to jail. What has Carter done to make him so frightened of the people? Nothing. It's what he hasn't done that has him so frightened. He won't choose. The devotees of lesser evil already are insisting that we've got to vote for Jimmy Carter; otherwise we get Reagan, nuclear war, idiots, fascism, civil discord, geriatrics, dramatics, Supreme Court appointments, all kinds of other scary stuff. Maybe I'll change my mind later, but at this point *I* won't choose. And that's a conscientious decision to refuse the junk our political system puts before us.

M.P.

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